

CASTING YOUR NETS: AN EVANGELISTIC MODEL  
FOR LEARNING TO SPEAK THE LANGUAGE  
OF FAITH BEYOND THE CHURCH WALLS

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## **ABSTRACT**

# **CASTING YOUR NETS: AN EVANGELISTIC MODEL FOR LEARNING TO SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF FAITH BEYOND THE CHURCH WALLS**

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This single-case descriptive project used a qualitative pro-active research approach. Its purpose was to motivate a small congregation in a changing neighborhood to reach beyond its doors, despite cultural and language barriers. Through three all-church retreats, the urgency of outreach was explored through mapping, asset inventory, and action plans, and teams were created to implement changes in five areas—Mission, Fellowship, Worship, Generosity, and Invitation. Data collection included participant observations, focus group interviews, individual interviews, and relevant documents. Based upon the resulting attitudinal transformation and sense of vitality, the congregation became an agent of change, and Latino neighbors were welcomed.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many people to whom I owe a debt of gratitude for their assistance on this journey. They have been Godsendings, and this project would not have been realized without their encouragement, support, assistance, and wisdom.

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Second, I express my heartfelt appreciation to my three professional associates. Dr. Ronald Williams Wells was responsible for my embarking on the journey, offered valuable feedback on my work, and took time out of his busy schedule to be part of my final examination committee. Dr. Jackie Baston spent many hours reading my work and provided valuable guidance in the area of data collection and analysis. Dr. David Traverzo Galarza worked in context with me, and was able to offer important suggestions in regards to project implementation, relevant literature, and reflections on results.

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passion were a blessing. Working with him deepened our friendship, and enhanced our individual and mutual ministries.

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Finally, I thank my family, who lovingly and patiently stood by me throughout it all. My daughter, Debbie, and my grandchildren, Zoe and Alex, saw much less of me, but inspired my work. Most of all, I am eternally grateful to my husband, Arthur Miller, who devotedly supported me by attending to all the everyday details of my life, and who tirelessly proofread each page over and over again. Without his love and encouragement, I would not have finished.

## DEDICATIONS

This project is dedicated to all who are still waiting outside the doors of the church to be invited in, both those who know about church, and those who do not. It is also dedicated to those inside the church, who are willing to take risks, break down barriers, make changes, and invite those yet to come.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ELCA	Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
ESL	English as a Second Language
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Ministries of the UCC
NCD	Natural Church Development
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
ONA	Open and Affirming (UCC churches that welcome LGBT persons)
PC (USA)	Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
RCA	Reformed Church of America
RCM	Regional Conference Minister
RSV	Revised Standard Version
UCC	United Church of Christ
UMC	United Methodist Church

## INTRODUCTION

This project was designed to motivate the congregation of a small church, located in the midst of a dramatically changing neighborhood in a suburb of metropolitan New York, to re-evaluate itself, its relationship with the people in that community, and its mission to those who live in its immediate environs. The setting was the Chatterton Hill Church, an eighty-member United Church of Christ (UCC) church in White Plains, New York. Established 102 years ago, the church's membership has declined greatly. While the majority of the current membership is African- or Caribbean-American, the Hispanic population in the neighborhood has increased significantly. The primary goal, therefore, was to provide the congregation, through a three-part series of workshops, with information and tools that would prompt it to reach out to those outside its own doors, despite cultural and language barriers.

Additionally, since other UCC churches across the state of New York find their numbers diminishing for one reason or another, the secondary goal was to use this pilot project implementation to create a more generic model. The author felt that such a model would empower and serve other congregations in revitalizing their own mission, based upon self-examination of their own particular situations. The participants in the pilot project, therefore, were advised of their role, and asked to provide feedback throughout the series as to what modifications would be helpful for a larger audience.

Chapter One contains the definition of the ministry focus for the project. By highlighting the background and faith journey of the author, as well as the church context

in which the pilot project was implemented, this chapter provides insight as to why this focus was important to both the author and her congregation.

In Chapter Two, the author cites current literature that addresses church transformation. She also discusses a number of current models of church revitalization, comparing and contrasting them with this project.

The author establishes the theoretical foundation for the project in Chapter Three. She also discusses theological principles and biblical references relevant to the focus of the project in this section.

In Chapter Four, the methodology and design of the model that was used in the field experience are explained. The reason for choosing these particular methods is described here, as well.

Chapter Five contains a comprehensive narrative description of the project, including preparation, implementation, data collection, and data analysis. It also highlights the outcome of the project.

In Chapter Six, the author presents her reflections of what occurred during the field experience. Here she summarizes the success of the pilot project in the local setting, and modifications and adaptations this fostered for its upcoming use in the wider New York Conference UCC setting in October 2007. Finally, the author presents here the insights she learned from developing and implementing this project.



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **MINISTRY FOCUS**

The nature of an action research project is such that the background of its author and the context in which it is to be implemented are integral to its design. To better understand the author's choice of this particular project, it is important then to understand the factors in her life journey that influenced that choice. Also, while context refers to the actual setting in which the project was implemented, other factors impacting the setting include human factors, the timeline of the church itself, and the denominational polity. All of these factors will be discussed here.

#### **The Author's Background**

The author is a white woman. Riverhead, the town in which she grew up, was a place where most of the people were like each other. In 1966, there were 269 students in her graduating class. Of this number, thirty-four were African-American, three were Jewish, and one was Hispanic. Racism was rampant, starting in the author's own household. She was the only one in her family who went to church, but even there she heard and witnessed expressions of racism. The whites had built very strong and tall barriers between themselves and anyone of a different race or culture.

The author began attending church at the age of five or so. Her parents did not attend church, but dropped her off at the First Congregational Church in her hometown. She was profoundly affected by her experience on that very first day. She learned that

God loved her, despite the fact that her family had assured her that she was unlovable. As a result, she spent every opportunity she could to be in church and do God's work ever since that day. It was in her spiritual life that she came to understand that all people are worthy in God's value system, no matter what culture or country they were from, or what race they are. Growing up, though, she just did not know very many people who shared her opinion, not even in church. It was her relationship with God, through Jesus, that taught her this lesson. She just knew it in the depths of her soul, despite what the world said to her.

During her teenage years, the author began to work as a mother's helper for an orthodox rabbi and his wife who lived on her street. The rabbi became her *father figure*. As she was Bat Mitzvah age, he took time to teach her some of the lessons along with the other girls who came to the house. His wife taught her to run the kosher kitchen, and he taught her the scriptural reasons for doing so. The rabbi was the one with whom she could discuss her theological questions, which he always answered objectively. Although Jewish, he was the most *Christian* person she knew during her growing-up years. This experience reinforced for her what she knew inside, that in God's eyes we are all unique, yet one.

It was during her years in seminary that the author finally found a place where multiculturalism existed. It filled her with joy to be part of a diverse group of people who were united in their deep commitment to learning and spreading God's word, and dedicating themselves to God's service. She felt her experience there to be like being in heaven on earth. "University in diversity" is integral to New York Theological Seminary. To be hand-in-hand on the faith journey with men and women of all colors, races, creeds,

and denominations was what she believed God intended for the world. The setting and tone of the seminary was, for her, a vision of what life outside its walls should also be like. She had never experienced anything like this before, although she knew it was exactly what she heard described in scripture. Instead, her world had been one filled with barriers between people.

During the author's last two years in seminary, she served as interim summer pastor in The First Parish Church in Jamesport, New York. It was here that she learned just how ironic it was that her mother had chosen her childhood church out of all the ones she could have picked. As part-time interim, she spent Saturday afternoons visiting the shut-ins of the congregation, one of whom was named Virginia Wines. She was a lover and compiler of the history of the area, the North Fork of Long Island. Each Saturday, she would have a book or document ready to share with the author. She soon learned that she was, in fact, descended on her mother's side from the Hortons, the very family who had come to America seeking religious freedom. Her forebear, Barnabas Horton, born in Mowsley, Leicestershire, England, came to New Haven, Connecticut in 1640. By that fall, he had permanently settled in Southold, and was part of the building of the first church in Jamesport. She was now standing and preaching behind the pulpit built by her ancestors.<sup>1</sup>

This new information was awesome to the author on many levels. First, to think that God had led her, a female descendent of the Hortons, unaware of her heritage, back to this historical place was incredible in its divine providence. This was the kind of bigger-than-thou events that had happened to her all her life. These were what had always

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<sup>1</sup>Virginia Wines, *The Pioneers of Riverhead Town* (Riverhead, NY: Suffolk County Historical Society, 1981), 22.

made her 100 percent sure that God is at work to achieve God's purposes. But what were those purposes?

The author's first reaction was, "Why me? What does God have in mind?" She had to come to terms with the fact that she was one with a people who had come to America because they wanted religious tolerance, but who were intolerant of everyone else's religious expression. Even worse, they and their descendents were arrogant in other ways, too. Anyone who comes to the East End of Long Island quickly realizes that he or she will never fit in if not descended from the original pioneers. Even if one is Caucasian, born and raised there, he or she will never be accepted if not part of the *founding fatherhood*. The author had abhorred this kind of attitude and way of viewing others her whole life, understanding it to be completely out of alignment with God's value system, and therefore, hers. Now she was more determined than ever to minister in a multicultural setting.

In May 1991, the author finally graduated from seminary. Later, in October of the same year, she accepted a call as part-time pastor of The Chatterton Hill Church UCC (United Church of Christ) in White Plains, New York, about 90 miles away from her hometown. She had interviewed at six churches, but there was no question as to which church she would choose. Chatterton Hill was, at first glance, a place very similar to New York Theological Seminary. It was a small multiracial, multicultural, multi-economic-status congregation. There was no mystery or mistake in her choice. It came out of her struggles with barrier-building and her desire to leave them behind, to be part of what she thinks God's church should look and act like.

The author has now been the pastor of this church for more than sixteen years. The congregation is a close-knit church family, where all care about each other, and nurture each other. They are concerned with justice, and do wonderful things in terms of mission. They appreciate and nurture the author as their pastor. They are proponents of human rights, and have sponsored workshops on Embracing Diversity—Ending Racism. This is a place where the members feel free to talk about their differences and celebrate them. They feel that teaching their children to do the same is a priority. Honest dialogue has been the church's strength in recent years. For the past two years, however, most of the church's attention has been focused on the celebration of its 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, which took place from June 2005 to June 2006. The church continued this historical celebration by also planning activities for its 101<sup>st</sup> and 102<sup>nd</sup> Anniversaries.

Church anniversaries provide congregations an opportunity to honor the faith journey upon which they have traveled, and a time to rejoice in God's providence in bringing the church so far. Even more importantly, though, is that it is a time for the church to re-evaluate itself, its relationship with its community and God, and its mission for the future. In fact, there is no better time to do so. Such a re-evaluation can be transformational. The United Church of Christ, too, is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2007.

Both the Chatterton Hill Church and the United Church of Christ have changed since their birth. Both of these stories are important to the Chatterton Hill Church's current state of being as a congregation.

## The Historical and Theological Roots of the United Church of Christ

The United Church of Christ (UCC), which came into being in 1957, represents the merger of two Protestant denominations, the Evangelical and Reformed Church, and the Congregational Christian Church. Each of these two churches was a result of an even earlier merger.<sup>2</sup>

The first was the merger of the Congregational and Christian Churches, which took place in 1931.<sup>3</sup> Congregationalism began in England as two distinct lines of dissent by 1558. One group, the Separatists, was the forerunner of the Plymouth Pilgrims. The second group, slightly more moderate in its criticism of the Anglican Church, was the Puritans. Between 1620 and 1640, representatives from both of these groups settled in New England. It was out of this relocation that Congregationalism developed, as the two groups established contact and became one by the end of the century.<sup>4</sup>

The Christian Churches were also formed under protest and dissension, actually through three revolts. The first was in 1792 when a Methodist minister in Virginia, James O'Kelly, withdrew and organized himself, with his followers, under the name Republican Methodists (later changed to "Christian"). A short time later, in 1801, Abner Jones left the Vermont Baptists to form the First Christian Church in New England. The third revolt was led by Barton W. Stone the same year. He led a number of Presbyterians to form the

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<sup>2</sup>*United Church of Christ—Who We Are—What We Believe* (Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 1993), 1.

<sup>3</sup>Frank S. Mead, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2001), 258.

<sup>4</sup>Daniel L. Johnson and Charles Hambrick-Stowe, ed., *Theology and Identity—Traditions, Movements, and Polity in the United Church of Christ* (Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 2001), 3-4.

Springfield Presbytery in Kentucky. These three groups met in a long series of conferences which led to their union.<sup>5</sup>

The Evangelical and Reformed Church was also the product of a union of two bodies of Swiss and German background in 1943. The first was the Evangelical Synod of North America, which began with six ministers who had joined forces near St. Louis in 1840 to form the Evangelical Union of the West. This movement spread to the East and Northwest and took on a new name, the German Evangelical Synod of America. The second body, the Reformed Church in the United States, originated in Switzerland and Germany. Many of its members immigrated to Pennsylvania in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup>

The fact that the UCC formed from the merger of four separate denomination roots into one denomination makes its motto very fitting: *That They May All Be One* (John 17:21, Revised Standard Version). This theology of unity is integral to the United Church of Christ.

Woven into the varied histories that have now become one are some things of which the UCC is proud to lay claim. UCC forebears wrote the first anti-slavery tract more than 300 years ago; organized the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1810; worked to free the Africans who were captured and brought to the United States aboard *La Amistad*; founded Harvard, Yale, and eight historically African American colleges, of which six still remain; moved anti-slavery members to Kansas to keep it a free state; supported the liberation of the Wilmington Ten; ordained Antoinette Brown, the first woman minister, in 1853; and, in 1985, voted at General Synod to

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<sup>5</sup>Mead, *Handbook*, 258-259.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 263-264.

monitor and support genetic engineering and technology.<sup>7</sup> Most recently, at the Twenty-Fifth General Synod in July 2005, a resolution was passed affirming equal marriage rights for couples regardless of gender, declaring that the government should not interfere with their ability to share full and equal access to the rights, responsibilities, and commitment of a legally recognized marriage.<sup>8</sup> This latest denominational resolution is perhaps the most controversial and the least accepted by those sitting in the pews of the autonomous member churches. The UCC has always addressed controversial topics head-on, taken a stance, and done so before others risked doing so. It is UCC polity that allows this type of risk-taking to occur.

### Polity of the United Church of Christ

Douglas Horton, minister and general secretary of the General Council of the Congregational Christian Churches at the time of the negotiations for union, observed, “The United Church of Christ is: PRESBYTERIAN in its legislative functions, since it works through representatives of presbyters; EPISCOPAL in its administrative system, since here it works through superintendents or episcopes; and CONGREGATIONAL in its judicial branch, since the congregations and several groupings make their own decisions and have no judge over them but Christ and the decent respect they have for all ... in Christ.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>*Restructuring Within the United Church of Christ: Our Evolving Ministry* (Cleveland, OH: UCCR, Inc., 2001), 2-3.

<sup>8</sup>United Church of Christ—L.G.B.T., “Marriage Equality,” available from <http://www.ucc.org/lgbt/marriage> (accessed November 28, 2007).

<sup>9</sup>Johnson and Hambrick-Stowe, *Theology and Identity*, 67-68.



UCC polity is, above all, Congregational. The members of each congregation exist in covenant with each other and with God. Building on congregational polity, the UCC now describes itself in terms of covenantal polity, wherein independent settings for ministry are related to one another by covenant. Each congregation exists in relationship with other congregations to form associations; and associations, in turn, exist in relationship with each other to form Conferences; and Conferences with each other to form General Synod on the national level. Yet, while all of these groups exist in relationship to each other, autonomy is fundamental to the polity of the UCC, as stated in the UCC Constitution and Bylaws: “The basic unit of life and organization of the United Church of Christ is the local church.”<sup>10</sup> The General Synod speaks *to* the whole church, but not *for* the whole church.

This autonomous structure has its advantages and disadvantages. It does give each local church the right to decide how involved it will be with the issues being addressed on a larger church level. The disadvantage, therefore, is that many important issues are addressed only at the state or national level, never to be acted upon locally. There are times when the denominational stance is out of line with what its churches actually profess and do, and vice versa. One very clear example of this is the denomination’s Open and Affirming initiative, known simply as ONA. Every UCC church is encouraged to declare itself ONA, a church that openly proclaims itself as welcoming and affirming to LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) persons. More than 400 UCC churches have done so.<sup>11</sup> The majority have not gone through the process, as they still wrestle with

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<sup>10</sup>*The Constitution and By-Laws of the United Church of Christ* (New York, NY: The Executive Council of the United Church of Christ, 1992), paragraph 7.

<sup>11</sup>*Rising and Shining! Open and Affirming in the UCC* (Cleveland, OH: UCC Resources, 2000), 1.

this difficult issue. The UCC ordains LGBT people, as well, and some UCC clergypersons perform civil unions between LGBT persons. The author has performed one such service. Her congregation is supportive of LGBT persons, but has not yet gone through the formal ONA process, which takes about two years.

### The Chatterton Hill Church

In the UCC, one becomes the minister of a local church by a process similar to that of applying for a job in the outside world. A minister prepares a profile, which includes his or her style of ministry, based upon completion of a list of ministry aspects. For example, one might indicate that his or her strength is working with youth, or visiting the sick and elderly. Items on the list include church administration, sermon style, areas of interest, and previous successes. The profile also includes the minister's theological statement. The minister indicates the location and size of church he or she would like, as well. At the same time, churches in the search process prepare similar profiles. The national office logs and matches up profiles. A packet of profiles is sent to the search committee of the church for processing by that committee. The committee reviews the profiles, contacts those candidates in whom they are interested, interviews them by phone, selects some to interview in person, and then invites the finalists to visit and preach at a neutral pulpit. The author was the finalist in a number of New York—Metropolitan churches at which she preached. She chose Chatterton Hill Church. She has been there for sixteen years as a part-time pastor. At the same time, she works full-time as a teacher of autistic children. As mentioned earlier, she chose this church because it was multi-cultural and good at it. It had not always been so. She gleaned the following

information by talking to the church's ninety-four-year-old historian, and by reading through handwritten journals with her.<sup>12</sup>

The church was founded in June 1905, to meet the need for a Sunday school in the area. This was done following a canvas which revealed that children associated with the Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, and Congregational Churches in the area were not attending Sunday school due to the great distance of those churches from their homes. Although this was the plan, the organization almost immediately became a church. With the children, came the adults. The church began with twenty-eight charter adult members, and by December that year had more than doubled in size. The Sunday school enrollment was seventy-three. Ten years later, the adult membership was 139; and twenty years later it was 388. For the next three decades, during the heyday of Protestantism in the United States, membership bordered between 200 and 300. All of the members were Caucasian. In the 1960's, there was a change.

Chatterton Hill Church has always been a neighborhood church. There is no parking lot, and little room to park on the street. The building is a small stone structure, nestled halfway up a steep hill, and easy to miss. Most of its members are people who live on the hill. A century ago, when the church began, the neighborhood itself was completely Caucasian, and, therefore, so were its members. During the Civil Rights era, African-Americans and Caribbean-Americans began to move onto the hill. The faces ever so slowly began to change in the pews, reflecting the immediate environs. By the time the author arrived in 1991, about two-thirds of the one-hundred members were African- and Caribbean-Americans. There was an active Women's Fellowship, made up of the twelve Caucasian women who were left, all over the age of eighty. They loved their church, but

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<sup>12</sup>Henrietta Kallé, Interview by Bonnie Miller, White Plains, NY, May 2005.

ten of them had numerous reasons for not attending on Sundays. The group did, however, meet on Tuesday mornings, to plan how to raise funds and to have lunch together afterwards. All but one of these women is now deceased. It is suspected that the reason they did not come to church is that they were unhappy with its integration. They were thrilled to have a white woman minister, until she married an African-American ten years ago. He preceded her in the church as a well-loved and respected member for almost thirty years. The result was that ten of the little white-haired ladies threatened to leave the church, as related to the author by the other two. Her response was that they had already left the church. Each, in fact, continued on in her same level of relationship to the congregation. The rest of the congregation, on the other hand, was extremely happy for the author and her husband, and attended their wedding. They continue to be supportive of the two as a couple.

The church now numbers eighty people. It is a mission-minded congregation, always working on projects within its own community of White Plains, and on projects brought to it by its denomination's Association, Conference, and national settings. For example, the church feeds the homeless men once a month at a shelter it was instrumental in founding about fifteen years ago. Each of the city churches takes responsibility for one night per month. The congregation also collects food items for the local Ecumenical Food Pantry. A number of women in the congregation belong to the local chapter of Church Women United, and bring back mission projects for the church to do. Chatterton Hill Church assembled more Christmas Shoe Boxes for needy children than any of the other White Plains churches, all of which are much bigger than it is. It collected two large trucks worth of items to be delivered to Haiti. It delivers warm winter accessories and

toiletries to the homeless each December. It made Health Kits to be shipped by Church World Service to tsunami victims, and donated a large sum to hurricane victims.

The congregation also teaches its children this same interest in mission. The Sunday school is currently raising funds in order to buy a cow for a needy family through Heifer Project International, and the youth group sponsored a needy youngster in all of his back-to-school clothes and school supplies. Several of the teenagers bake, deliver, and serve dessert each month at the Men's Shelter.

In the meantime, the neighborhood has once again undergone a transformation. Ten years ago there were 29 people of Hispanic origin. Two years ago, the Hispanic population in the church's zip code area of White Plains was 5,562 (36.7% of 15,158).<sup>13</sup> Last year, the Hispanic population rose to 6,652 (42.1% of 15,801).<sup>14</sup> Now, that number has risen to 7,118 (43.8% of 16,252). This is expected to rise by 26.5 percent in the next five years.<sup>15</sup> Despite these numbers, there are currently no Hispanic members in the congregation.

The sad fact is that Chatterton Hill Church is not alone in this dilemma. The author has been the chairperson of the Metropolitan Association's Committee on Congregational Development and Standing for four years. This committee works with all 74 churches in the New York Metropolitan area. Unfortunately, a majority of them are facing the same challenge that her congregation is. The committee has been able to work

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<sup>13</sup>Percept, "My Community—10 Facts," available from <http://link2lead.com/L2L/MyCommunity/10Facts.asp?m=Summary&r=S> (accessed March 4, 2004).

<sup>14</sup>Percept, "My Community—10 Facts," available from <http://link2lead.com/L2L/MyCommunity/10Facts.asp?m=Summary&r=S> (accessed June 26, 2005).

<sup>15</sup>Percept, "My Community—10 Facts," available from <http://link2lead.com/L2L/MyCommunity/10Facts.asp?m=Summary&r=S> (accessed December 7, 2006).

with two congregations that are successfully ministering to Spanish-speaking brothers and sisters, but it remains difficult to maintain a close relationship with them. Many of the people in these churches speak no English at all, and are reluctant to come to larger church gatherings and meetings.

In the author's own church, some of the members were genuinely interested in her doing outreach to this population. In other words, prior to the implementation of this project, the members were not opposed to opening the church's doors to these neighbors, and made suggestions on what might work. They were, however, not actively involved in the programs. There were some who did not feel that the church could really reach out to the Hispanic population because they do not speak English. If they would only learn English, they said, maybe, just maybe it would work.

To address this need, the author began a Saturday afternoon program for the Latino neighbors. The group meets for three hours, and offers ESL (English as a Second Language) classes, a women's support group, knitting lessons, and a short worship service. The author enlisted the assistance of a Dominican woman minister, the Hispanic convener from Riverside Church in Manhattan. The only person from the congregation that helps is the author's husband. The first large evening gathering took place in December 2004, and was attended by eight members of the congregation. A very moving bilingual service was also held on Pentecost Sunday in May 2005, with the Latinas reading the scripture in English, the congregants reading it in Spanish, and everyone singing hymns in both languages. This was followed by a great meal hosted by the Latinas. In December 2005, a wonderful Christmas program was hosted for the neighborhood children. This was also attended by some of the congregants and their

children. Although there has been some interest in starting Sunday church services in Spanish, this effort had not yet been realized.

Prior to this project, the only funding for all of this had come from the author. She had applied for several grants, and had received two small ones. The group is not yet big enough to sustain itself, and the established congregation struggles to make ends meet. The author's hope was that, if both groups would work together, the problems of size and finances would be overcome.

In addition to this emerging relationship with Spanish-speaking friends, the church recently began a close affiliation with a Korean church of its own denomination. This congregation, Grace UCC, was a new-church-start in the Bronx, a borough of New York City, eight years ago. In January, 2006, the church's pastor, the Reverend Insook Oakes, requested that Chatterton Hill Church consider allowing her congregation to *nest* with it. They had outgrown their setting, and wanted to learn more about how to be a United Church of Christ church. This congregation moved in on April 1, 2006. The following week, a joint Easter service was held in both languages, followed by a Korean lunch sponsored by the Grace congregation. The church schools and youth group from both congregations merged, and instantly bonded. All youth attend the English-speaking services. Unfortunately, the adults in the Korean congregation had a rift in June, 2006 and most of them left. Those remaining attend the English-speaking worship on Communion Sundays, and then meet for their own meditation and prayer immediately following the service. On the other three Sundays of each month, they attend a separate worship service in their own language, led by Reverend Oakes.

The new slogan for the United Church of Christ denomination is *God Is Still Speaking*, with the subtitle, *Never place a period where God has put a comma* (a quote from Gracie Allen). The author truly felt that God was speaking to her congregation and telling them what they needed to do. God was directing them to minister to everyone in their midst, regardless of race, creed, sexual orientation, class, ability, nationality or any other label used to separate others from one's self. As the author looked back upon her faith journey, she realized that God continued to call her to use the experiences of her life, and her desire to break down barriers and to seek unity in diversity, so that she might lead her congregation to do the same.

While the Chatterton Hill Church might not be able to change all of the United States of America, the author believed it could start the process right where it is, in White Plains. By beginning an honest dialogue that included a look back at its history, at the long journey upon which it had trod, and its current outlooks and attitudes, the author was certain that her congregation could move closer toward becoming a multicultural, mission-focused church in its own small part of the world. This belief gave birth to her design of the project.



## CHAPTER TWO

### THE STATE OF THE ART IN THIS MINISTRY PROJECT

#### Literature and Current Issues for the Ministry Focus

John Edmund Kaiser writes that it is “vital to the success of a missional church that all the key players share one heart and mind concerning the purpose of a church.”<sup>1</sup> He adds that, while the individual who is accountable to lead the church in mission is the pastor, he or she cannot be the only person working toward evangelism. The church can be diverse in its make-up, and the roles each person plays can be diverse, as well, but the entire church must be committed to the same goal in order to be effective. The author found this to be true in the case of the Chatterton Hill Church. As its pastor, she was concerned for many years about the congregation’s lack of motivation to reach out to its neighbors. Becoming a missional church was her vision, but not the church’s. Preaching and coaxing the congregation to participate in such a mission fell on deaf ears. Even after beginning the mission on her own, invitations to join her one-person crusade toward this goal were unanswered. Two congregants showed up occasionally at the ESL program when knitting lessons were added to the program, and a few members attended the Christmas party. Clearly, the congregation did not own this mission yet. Kaiser goes on to point out that the relationship between the pastor and the congregation is the key to the success of the mission, and that it can be either of two paradigms. In a control paradigm,

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<sup>1</sup>John Edmund Kaiser, *Winning on Purpose: How to Organize Congregations to Succeed in Their Mission* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 82.

he says, both the pastor and the people are vying for control, with the result that doing things a certain way becomes more important than bearing fruit. In a trust paradigm, however, the pastor entrusts the ministries of the church to the people, and the people entrust the leadership of the church to the pastor. In this model, bearing much fruit is more important than the way things get done.<sup>2</sup>

The author would add a third paradigm, which seems to be at work in her church. It is one where neither vies for control. Perhaps the reason for this derives from the denominational autonomy. The author, as pastor, preaches Sunday sermons and provides scriptural reasons for various actions at corporate or board meetings. Because of UCC polity, however, she is technically the *employee* of the congregation. While it does not treat her as such, neither does she have the same authority present in other denominations. There is some level of autonomy at play in the relationship between pastor and people in this paradigm. It is present within many local UCC congregations.

Randi Jones Walker addresses this issue in her recent study of cultural diversity within the UCC. She notes that while an engagement with diversity is more obvious in the national setting of the denomination, or in the Conferences, the reality is that UCC diversity happens more often between local UCC churches, rather than within them.<sup>3</sup> In other words, more often than not, each local church carries within itself its own unique traditions and culture. Each church, therefore, attracts to itself others like those already there.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 87-88.

<sup>3</sup>Randi Jones Walker, *The Evolution of a UCC Style: Essays in the History, Ecclesiology, and Culture of the United Church of Christ* (Cleveland, OH: United Church Press, 2005), 130.

How then does the pastor motivate the congregation in such a church? Philip V. Lewis writes that when something does not work the first time, transformational leaders restudy the situation and look for a better approach. Such leaders encourage human potential within those they pastor. Their goal, he says, is to change the minds and hearts of those they lead, to enlarge their vision, insight, and understanding. They help their congregants to make their behavior reflect those expanded beliefs, principles, and values, with the result that they bring about changes that are permanent, self-perpetuating, and momentum-building. This, he says, requires *metanoia*, or a shift in the way one perceives, understands, and interprets the world.<sup>4</sup>

Lewis outlines three stages in transforming the church. The first he calls the *awakening*, which involves recognizing the need for revitalization. In the second stage, *envisioning*, a vision is created and the workers are mobilized. In the final stage, *re-architecting*, the design and construction of the new organization are detailed. This is the stage in which the power structure of the church is redesigned so that people can work together to get things done. Lewis makes it clear that this is an ongoing, continuous process.<sup>5</sup>

The author had already identified a similar progression of stages necessary to mobilize her church, but had also realized that she did yet have the power to adequately convey the need for revitalization to the congregation. Lewis points out that if church leaders want to cause transformation, they must use their own power to empower their members. They do so by giving them the knowledge, skills, information, resources, and

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<sup>4</sup>Philip V. Lewis, *Transformational Leadership: A New Model for Total Church Involvement* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 6-7.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 8-12.

support to accomplish their goals. This, then, allows them to be able to think, reason, plan, and then implement those plans.<sup>6</sup> This model of mutual, empowered, ministry is what this project utilized.

The premise of the project was that the essential mission of the church, and therefore of the members in it, is to reach out to include all the children of God. David Bosch says, “Mission [is] understood as being derived from the very nature of God. . . . The classical doctrine of the *missio Dei* as God the Father sending the Son, and God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit [is] expanded to include yet another “movement”: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.”<sup>7</sup>

The world is what lies outside the doors of the church. Most of the time, the mission field can be found in the neighborhood immediately surrounding the church, where those not yet invited await the good news and fellowship that the congregation has to offer. Some might wander into the church, and might even stay, but more often than not, the church needs to take the initiative and move outward. To move outward involves willingness to not only welcome, but to embrace the culture of others.

Culture can be defined as “the total set of values, norms, attitudes, and creations that distinguishes a people from another, that conforms their conception of time, and that determines their relationship with their living space.”<sup>8</sup> Orlando Costas writes that in order to evangelize those from another culture, the gospel must penetrate the attitudes and value system of those that are being evangelized. It must address the role of institutions in

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<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 21-22.

<sup>7</sup>David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY:Orbis, 1993), 390.

<sup>8</sup>Orlando Costas, *Christ Outside the Gate: Mission Beyond Christendom* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Books on Demand, 2006), 165.

the cross-cultural, oppressive situations they foster, and it must contextualize the message. This emphasis reflects the Christian mission of “the whole world for the whole gospel.”<sup>9</sup>

Costas points out that any church that wants to claim the “whole world” as its mission field must confront the structures and organizations that dominate and oppress human beings. He adds that this is not easy, as it might be that one such structure or organization is the church itself.<sup>10</sup>

The church may not recognize this in itself. It is easy for members of a congregation to witness to others like themselves in their midst, to worship joyfully, and even to “do good deeds” for those outside their doors whom they consider “different”. In this way, the church can delude itself into thinking it is following the gospel.

Ministering to the poor and the stranger outside the doors of the church, however, is not enough. Doing work in Jesus’ name can delude a congregation into thinking it is following the biblical imperative to help the poor. Sometimes this is easier than establishing a real relationship. Christ, however, is not the private possession of any one church or person, and the church is not to be an *exclusive fellowship* or a *club of insiders*. Costas contends that Christendom is just that, labeling it a historical project, with the church as its manager. He adds that the people are divided into insiders and *outsiders*.<sup>11</sup> This is not mission, he says, nor does it answer Jesus’ call to “make disciples” of the *kosmos*.

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 168-169.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., 171.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., 189.

Instead, says Costas, it is important to remember that Christ died outside the gate. Some theologians discuss the meaning of this strange reference in Hebrew 13:12 in terms of laws about food, or the early church's misunderstandings about eating the "body of Christ". Costas, on the other hand, assigns this text a different meaning. For him, the importance rests in the fact that Christ died in the midst of outsiders.<sup>12</sup>

Christ did not simply die inside the gate, so that those outside the gate could hear about it and benefit from it. He died in the midst of the outsiders. It is not enough to just send the good news out, or even to give financially or materially to those outside the gate. Discipleship happens when people seek wholeness in creation. This requires willingness to be in the midst of, to be in relationship with, and to share a joyous witness with, those who are different, who live *outside the gate* of the church. It involves sacrificing one's position of *insider*, actively seeking out the "outsiders," and inviting them in to join the family.

This missional outreach sets the tone and ministry agenda for authentic Christian discipleship. The focus, therefore, is our identification with the same Christ who threw his lot with the marginalized and the abandoned of the earth. Christ died outside the religious compounds of close-mindedness and limited vision. As Christ's disciples, we are invited to risk our present paradigms of conventionality and to open ourselves to God's future, a new creation in Christ. This idea of risk-taking was integral to the project.

### Other Models of Church Revitalization

The *Institute on Religion and Democracy* reports that, since the 1960s, membership in the mainline Protestant church denominations has been in steady decline.

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

The UCC is among those mentioned, along with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and the United Methodist Church.<sup>13</sup>

A local newspaper, *The Journal News*, published similar findings in a special report published in June, 2005. This report included a reprint of a previous article written by Gary Stern in May 2003, in which he stated that membership in the five most prominent mainline denominations in New York City and the surrounding suburbs had fallen by 45 percent since 1960. The five listed were the United Methodist Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), and, once again, the UCC. Mr. Stern added these denominations understood that they needed to reach out to minorities from other faith backgrounds, as well as recent immigrants, but were not sure who they were or what they had to offer. He described them as trying to reconnect with their communities, saying that some intense programming had begun.<sup>14</sup>

Now, four years later, only a handful of programs are evident within these denominations. In 1999, the General Synod of the UCC passed a resolution urging the expenditure of funds to enhance the name recognition of the denomination. The complaint was that the general public was confusing the UCC with the Church of God, the Church of Christ, or just did not recognize the name as a mainstream denomination.

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<sup>13</sup>Institute on Religion and Democracy, "Chart of Mainline Church Membership Decline," available from <http://www.ird-renew.org/site/apps/nl/content2.asp?c=fvKVLfMVIsG&b=470745&ct=1571507> (accessed September 1, 2007).

<sup>14</sup>Gary Stern, "Mainline Protestants Being Left Behind," *The Journal News*, 4 May 2003, available from <http://lohud.com/mainline> (accessed September 1, 2007).

The purpose would be to spur membership growth and new starts at the local church level.<sup>15</sup>

By January 2002, Ron Buford had been named Interim Executive for this endeavor, which was named *The Stillspeaking Initiative*. After working with a team to develop strategies, materials, a website, and collaborating with *Gotham*, a multi-billion dollar ad agency, he sent a letter dated May 21, 2004, to all churches in the denomination, asking them to participate in regional one-day training sessions. The purpose of these sessions was to highlight the *God Is Still Speaking* national television advertising campaign to be launched in Advent of that year. The theme was based on a quote by comedienne Gracie Allen, “Never place a period where God has placed a comma.” It was suggested that local churches do advertising on cable and in area newspapers, as well. It was thought that the denomination, about which little was known by most lay people, would claim *brand name* recognition through such advertising. Each church was asked to form a hospitality team, as it was expected that many people would arrive on the doorsteps of UCC churches after seeing the advertisements. Church leaders who attended these training sessions received a manual full of resources to be used with these newcomers in the local church.

Two of the ads proved controversial due to their multi-cultural and gay-affirming messages. This provoked similar feelings from some members of local UCC churches, as well. While these ads won several prestigious advertising awards, several broadcast networks rejected the ads, citing the position that their networks do no religious advocacy

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<sup>15</sup>Wikipedia, “God Is Still Speaking,” available from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God\\_is\\_still\\_speaking](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/God_is_still_speaking) (accessed September 3, 2007).



advertising. The backlash to this refusal triggered national news coverage for the campaign.<sup>16</sup>

The Reverend Michael Caine, Regional Conference Minister of the New York Metropolitan Association UCC, reports that Ron Buford felt that this would need to be a twenty-year campaign to achieve the type of brand name recognition that was intended. Monies raised for the campaign, however, allowed for only three six-week ad runs over approximately two years.<sup>17</sup>

Since that time, churches that registered as participants still receive motivational e-mails on a regular basis. This, however, was not a program to be used in a church, nor did it achieve the expected results. Membership did not increase dramatically, nor does there seem to be less confusion as to what the UCC is all about. The author continues to frequently hear the same comments from people, “I never heard of the UCC. What is that?”

The initiative has now reached a new phase. Developed almost concurrently with the model presented here, the UCC has now developed further programming entitled *Ready, Set, Grow!*<sup>18</sup> The program includes online resources, organized in three *Vitality Modules*.

Module 1 is entitled *Vital Churches Discern God’s Mission*. It includes a bible study, a resource to assist in negotiating the website, a survey to gauge the pulse of the

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Reverend Michael Caine, September, 2007. Conversation with Bonnie Miller, White Plains, NY.

<sup>18</sup>United Church of Christ—Congregational Vitality, “Ready, Set, Grow Introduction,” available from <http://www.uccvitality.org/resource/ready-set-grow-introduction.html> (accessed August 18, 2007).

congregation, and an online course to help the congregation discern, articulate, and grow in God's purpose.

Module 2 is labeled *Vital Churches Know Their Community and Today's Culture*. This section provides tools for understanding the changes in today's culture that impact churches, on-line demographic information, and a guide for helping a congregation to get to know its neighbors.

The title of Module 3 is *Vital Churches Foster Discipleship*. There are two resources in this module, one which provides information about the UCC, and another highlighting a program used by a particular local church to integrate new members into the life of its congregation.

As the designers of the website indicate, those who are reviewing its resources are encouraged to share the tools with others in the congregation. Suggestions are added for using any or all of those tools. There is a final paragraph, however, which advises that one should check the association or conference office to find out what congregation vitality programs are offered in the local area, or should check the list of upcoming vitality events contained on the website. Upon further investigation, it was found that this training is only being done presently at the national headquarters in Cleveland, Ohio.

While this denominational model offers many worthwhile resources and tools, it is not well-known in local UCC churches. In fact, most do not know that this model is in any way associated with *God Is Still Speaking*, or Ron Buford. In addition, it is not actually a program. Instead, it is a set of resources which must be sought out by local pastors or congregations. While staff on the national level may be contacted for questions

or assistance, and perhaps this might even be done on-site, there is no ongoing relationship between the designers of the tools and those using it.

Other mainline Protestant denominations also focus on church revitalization. In fact, one of the author's colleagues, a pastor in another UCC church in the New York Metropolitan Association, has chosen to use the Reformed Church of America's (RCA) program entitled *Natural Church Development* (NCD).<sup>19</sup> The RCA has trained NCD coaches to help churches implement this program. If a church, after reviewing the program, decides to go forward, a coach is assigned to help the church complete a survey to measure itself in eight areas that affect the life, effectiveness, and growth of congregations—empowering leadership, gift-oriented ministry, passionate spirituality, functional structures, inspiring worship, holistic small groups, need-oriented evangelism, and loving relationships. The NCD coach then helps the church form a Church Health Team. A nine to twelve month process follows, during which the church addresses its *minimum factor*. This is based upon the results of the survey, specifically the characteristic on which the church scored lowest. The premise of this model is that the church should use its strengths to target the weakest area of ministry. This is to be a cyclical process, as the church is encouraged to take the survey again after a year.

As will be seen in Methodology section of this document, this is in direct contrast to the author's model. While the areas of ministry addressed are somewhat similar, her model does not touch upon a church's weakness. The emphasis, instead, is a positive, *glass half full* approach, focusing on the talents, gifts, and strengths that a church has to offer. These are used to reach out to a targeted group of people in the community. The

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<sup>19</sup>Reformed Church in America, "Natural Church Development," available in <http://www.rca.org/NETCOMMUNITY/Page.aspx?&pid=688&srcid=2225> (accessed August 28, 2007).

author believes that this model is more motivating and uplifting, as it can provide a congregation with a sense of empowerment and self-esteem.

A search of the denominational website for the Presbyterian Church (U. S. A.) revealed no specific program for church revitalization. The Evangelism and Church Growth Office of PC (USA), however, in response to requests from a number of presbyteries looking for such a program, offered its first joint conference August 31 to September 3, 2007 in Nashville, Tennessee. The title of the conference was *You Will be My Witnesses . . . Come and See . . . Learn and Grow . . . Go and Witness*. A variety of workshops were held, focusing on *Congregational Transformation, New Church Development, Multicultural Ministries, Health Ministries, and Congregational Based Community Organizing*.<sup>20</sup>

In its *2001 Churchwide Assembly*, another denomination, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), presented an overview of its evangelism efforts to those assembled. At that same time, the presiding bishop established a 33-member task force to shape a comprehensive evangelism strategy, to be adopted at the *2003 Churchwide Assembly*. The result was a four-objective strategy: *Objective I: Call the Church to Prayer; Objective II: Prepare and Renew Evangelical Leaders; Objective III: Teach Discipleship; and Objective IV: Start and Renew Congregations*. Contained within these modules are several suggestions for outreach. For example, the third module mentions that a church could host an inspirational evangelical mass rally, or revival.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), "National Presbyterian Evangelism Conference," available in <http://www.pcusa.org/gac/business/march07/jointconference.pdf> (accessed September 1, 2007).

<sup>21</sup>Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, "Toward a Vision for Evangelism: A Guide for Prayer, Bible Study and Planning," available in <http://www.elca.org/visionevangelism/strategysummary.pdf> (accessed September 3, 2007).

While the ELCA strategy lists many wonderful evangelism suggestions, it is just that . . . a list of suggestions. It is not a program. It is, instead, a guide for getting started. Again, it must be sought out by the local pastor or congregation, and implemented with little or no help by the denomination.

In July 2000, the General Convention of the Episcopal Church began a movement called *2020*. Its goal, based on the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19, was that by the year 2020, the membership of the denomination would double in size.<sup>22</sup> In order to realize this increase, it conducts seminars around the United States three times each year. The title of these five-day seminars is *Start Up! Start Over!* Agenda topics include such topics as marketing, interpreting demographics, using multi-media, making the church more inviting, and involving new members in the life of the church.<sup>23</sup> Congregations are encouraged to bring teams of clergy and laity to these seminars, but, once again, they must bring their expertise back to the local church and implement what they have learned on their own.

The United Methodist Church (UMC) has numerous online revitalization tools. A local church can start by using an interactive Church Vitality Indicator survey to assess its health and determine ministry areas of greatest potential. This must be purchased, with the price based upon the size of the congregation, and takes about four to six weeks to complete. When this is done, the tool analyzes the answers and provides tailor-made

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<sup>22</sup>The Episcopal Church, “2020—The Episcopal Church in Mission,” available from [http://www.episcopalchurch.org/growth\\_50962\\_ENG\\_HTML.htm?menupage=50960](http://www.episcopalchurch.org/growth_50962_ENG_HTML.htm?menupage=50960) (accessed September 3, 2007).

<sup>23</sup>The Episcopal Church, “Start Up! Start Over!” available from <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/Startup.htm?menupage=51119> (accessed September 3, 2007).

resources to be used by the local church. The website claim is that, “It’s like having access to a ministry consultant 24/7!”<sup>24</sup>

The UMC provides other resources, as well, most of which are books, pamphlets, or guides for purchase. There is one program offered by the UMC General Board of Discipleship, *New Beginnings: A Strategy for Local Church Renewal and Revitalization*. It is described as a one-day event which teaches pastors and key leadership teams strategies for effectively reaching out to make disciples.<sup>25</sup>

While there is no way to gauge the success of resources, one UMC pastor has earned a reputation using his own strategy for growing churches. Michael Slaughter, one of the pastors of Ginghamburg United Methodist Church in Tipp City, Ohio, increased the church’s worship attendance from 90 in 1979, to 2,200 in 1996. He points out, however, that this statistic should not be an indicator of church renewal. Instead, the evidence of renewal is transformed lives.<sup>26</sup>

In order to achieve this goal, he devised six principles of renewal, based upon those evident throughout the history of the church. The *Lordship Principle* is that Jesus Christ must be the focus and object of faith. The *Biblical Principle* is that scripture must be the primary source of what is believed and done. The *Liturgical Principle* leads to the discovery of new ways to worship. The *Covenant Principle* engenders a commitment to the integrity of membership. The *Priesthood Principle* equips lay persons for ministry.

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<sup>24</sup>United Methodist Church, “Church Vitality Indicator,” available from <http://www.cvindicator.com/#> (accessed September 3, 2007).

<sup>25</sup>United Methodist Church, “New Beginnings: A Strategy for Local Church Renewal and Revitalization,” available from <http://www.gbod.org/evangelism/resources.asp> (accessed September 3, 2007).

<sup>26</sup>Michael Slaughter, *Spiritual Entrepreneurs: 6 Principles for Risking Renewal* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 19.

Finally, the *Leadership Principle* brings about spiritual entrepreneurship. All of these are integrally connected with each other.<sup>27</sup>

Slaughter's strategy involves having the church first develop a mission statement, then a goal of assimilation, and subsequently what he refers to as *assimilation circles*. This process moves each person from the initial *worship circle*, into the *Sunday school circle*, where the person develops relationships and grows spiritually. The next level of growth is the *cell circle*. In this small group experience, the person is provided with real fellowship, which Slaughter says leads to accountability and encouragement. Finally, the person moves into the *ministry circle* as he or she becomes more committed.<sup>28</sup>

All of this certainly contributes to the growth of the individual. It is Slaughter's use of what he calls the *Covenant Network*, however, that leads to growth of new cells. Leadership is delegated to eight *coordinating pastors*, who meet monthly to discuss the ongoing vision of the church. Each oversees four *team pastors*, who, in turn, oversee five *cell pastors*. This model resembles spokes of a wheel leading out from the hub, or senior pastor. Like a cell dividing, the church cells multiply as they move out from the hub.<sup>29</sup>

An important aspect of this model is that it uses worship forms that work for people, at a time that works for them. Instead of making people fit the church, the church adapts to fit the people. Slaughter believes that this model works because he and his congregation are committed and faithful enough to take risks. This is essential to all models of church growth.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 18.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 120-123.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., 132-122

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 68.

## CHAPTER THREE

### THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

The author's yearning for unity and harmony in the world finds its basis in scripture. It may be found throughout both the Old and New Testament.

#### Biblical Foundations

How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity! It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collars of his robes. It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion. For there the Lord ordained his blessing, life forevermore.<sup>1</sup>

This psalm, which falls in the fifth section of the Psalter, is the next to last in the subsection (Psalms 120-134) bearing the superscription "A Song of Ascents." While scholars do not agree on the date or purpose of its composition, it is probable that this collection was used by the pilgrims who came to Jerusalem for the great feasts. This would date them later than the return of the exiles to Jerusalem from Babylon.<sup>2</sup>

Using vivid imagery, the psalmist describes here how beautiful it is when people live in unity and harmony. The author compares unity to the oil that consecrated Aaron. This oil, when poured on Aaron's head, flowed down his beard and shoulders, and onto

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<sup>1</sup>Psalm 133:1-3, NRSV

<sup>2</sup>William R. Taylor, *Exegesis Psalms 120-138, The Interpreter's Bible, vol. 4* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1984), 638.



the breastplate he wore, with the names of all 12 tribes of Israel. Thus, it symbolized the unity of the entire nation. As the oil flowed, it consecrated both Aaron and all the people as one.<sup>3</sup>

The psalmist then compared unity to the dew that moved down from Mount Hermon in the north onto Mount Zion. While this is not a physical possibility, this symbolized what was freshening and invigorating. The psalmist's imagery suggests that when people live in unity, it is not merely a pleasant way to live. It is also a way of life that keeps people continuously refreshed and invigorated.<sup>4</sup>

This is true in the church. It is obvious that when a church is at odds within itself, there will be no growth. The focus will be upon resolving conflict within, or perhaps even in keeping the conflict alive and well. Unless a church works in concert to achieve its purposes, and realizes those purposes to be God-centered, it will not be a place that attracts new people into its fold.

There are churches, however, that do reside in harmony and unity. They are of one mind, and that is to stay exactly as they are. The important message in this psalm, besides unity, is anointing. The church must be united and anointed for ministry. The oil poured upon Aaron's head flowed down upon the people, anointing them in ministry, as well. This is crucial in ministry. The pastor is not the only minister in the church. All are called to seek unity.

The image of refreshing, invigorating dew is also important. Water is essential for life. Water cleanses, quenches thirst, and keeps created things from dying. When

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<sup>3</sup>J. F. Walvoord, R. B. Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-1985), electronic edition.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

someone is thirsty and withering, a drink of water revives and rejuvenates. In this psalm, the author suggests that unity can revive a group of people.

This can be very true. When a congregation organizes itself around an issue, it can become energized to accomplish it. It is also true that new members who are sought out, welcomed in, and valued as part of the whole can bring new life and energy to a congregation. This type of unity is indeed as precious as the oil that anoints.

If then, the whole congregation is called to ministry, what is that ministry? Again, it is not an inward-focused ministry. It is to be a ministry of evangelism and mission that looks outside the congregation, seeking others who are not yet part of the gathered community. Jesus made this very clear near the end of his time on earth.

And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”<sup>5</sup>

Scholars point out that discipleship leading to mission is an important theme throughout Matthew, culminating in this final passage. In Jesus’ first call to the disciples, he tells them that if they follow him, they will become “fishers of men.”<sup>6</sup> From the very beginning, then, the purpose of discipleship is equated with enlarging and expanding the fellowship of believers. This missionary emphasis continues as the author proceeds through the gospel.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Matthew 28:19-20, NRSV

<sup>6</sup>Matthew 4:19

<sup>7</sup>R.B. Zuck, Bock, D. L., & Dallas Theological Seminary, *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1994), electronic edition.

The character and behavior expected of disciples is described in the Beatitudes,<sup>8</sup> and then there is a discussion on true righteousness.<sup>9</sup> Between the two, however, is a small passage that includes another commission, the announcement that disciples should be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.<sup>10</sup> Salt and light are objects associated in the Old Testament with God's blessing. The reference to the disciples as the light of the world is comparable to the role of the Servant of Isaiah: "I will also make you a light for the nations that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth" (Isa. 49:6).<sup>11</sup> These associations thus serve to remind the disciples that they are to go and witness.<sup>12</sup>

But, again, to whom should they witness? The term *all nations* occurs in both Old and New Testaments, and would seem to include both Jews and Gentiles. The term *Gentile* has its roots in the Old Testament references to seven nations, or *goyim* in Hebrew, referring to the seven nations not driven completely from the land.<sup>13</sup> According to several traditions, the Jews were to maintain strict separation from them in matters of religion, marriage, and politics.<sup>14</sup>

History indicates, however, that there was a considerable amount of interchange between Israel and these nations.<sup>15</sup> Achtemeier points out that Isaiah speaks of Israel as *a*

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<sup>8</sup>Matthew 5:3-10

<sup>9</sup>Matthew 6:1-18

<sup>10</sup>Matthew 5:3-10

<sup>11</sup>Isaiah 49:6

<sup>12</sup>Zuck, 42.

<sup>13</sup>Joshua 24:11

<sup>14</sup>Exodus 23:28-33; Deuteronomy 7:1-5; Joshua 23:4-13

<sup>15</sup>P. J. Achtemeier, P. Harper & Row, & Society of Biblical Literature, *Harper's Bible Dictionary* (San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row: 1993), electronic edition.

*light to the nations* (42:6; 60:3); and also says that in the latter days, the nations would flow to Jerusalem to learn Torah (2:2-4) or to participate in the coming reign of God (45:22-24; 51:4-5).<sup>16</sup>

Scholars indicate that after the Exile, the meaning of this term changes from indicating merely a division of *nations*, to one indicating an individual *Gentile* (*goy*). The subject of whether or not Gentiles have access to the God of Israel continues to surface. For example, perhaps trying to establish a separation between Jews and Gentiles, Ezra and Nehemiah commanded Jews in Jerusalem to divorce their non-Jewish wives (Ezra 9-10; Nehemiah 10:30; 13:23-31).<sup>17</sup> The Apocrypha, too, highlights concern for differences, with I Maccabees 1 underscoring the contrast between life according to Jewish and Gentile law and custom.<sup>18</sup> While it was possible for a Gentile to become a Jewish proselyte, many of those attracted to Jewish monotheism became, instead, *God-fearers* (Acts 10:2; 13:16) rather than undergo circumcision and keep the food laws required of full converts.

In chapter 10, Jesus gives instructions as to where this mission field is to be, namely “the lost sheep of house of Israel (10:6).” Gentiles are explicitly excluded in this instruction (10:5). As the gospel continues, however, there is a shift in direction. Although there is still some hope, it begins to become clear that not all Jews are going to understand or believe that Jesus is their long-awaited Messiah. Israel is still the priority, but it is turning a deaf ear. While some scholars see a complete shift in focus toward the

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

Gentiles, it is important to note that Matthew showed this same concern for ministry to the Israelites again toward the end of the gospel, where he recorded Jesus' affirmation that He would continue sending emissaries to Israel (23:34).<sup>19</sup>

In the next chapter, concern for the Gentiles surfaces. Jesus tells the disciples that the gospel “will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come” (24:14). The New Testament Greek word here, ἔθνος (*ethnos*), in the plural form, *nations*, refers to a large group based on various cultural, physical or geographic ties.<sup>20</sup> It occurs two other times after this in Matthew, in 25:32, where Jesus speaks about the judgment of the nations when he returns, and then in the final passage, 28:19. By the end of Matthew's gospel, therefore, the mission is to all people, of all nations. Jews are not abandoned, but Gentiles are added to those to whom the gospel should be taken.

It should also be noted that the commission in Matthew only includes one action verb, and that is to *make disciples*. The way to do this is indicated by three participles in the Greek: *going*, *baptizing*, and *teaching*.<sup>21</sup> The commission, as found in the longer ending of Mark, is to, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., 43.

<sup>20</sup>J. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek New Testament* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc, 1997), electronic edition.

<sup>21</sup>J. F. Walvoord, R. B. Zuck, & Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-1985), electronic edition.

creation.”<sup>22</sup> Here, κόσμος (*kosmos*) means the surface of the earth, where humankind dwells.<sup>23</sup>

As the Acts of the Apostles begins, this has not yet happened. W. W. Wiersbe notes that Acts 1–10 describes a gradual transition in mission focus from Israel, to the Gentiles, and from *Jewish Christianity* to the *one body* made up of both Jews and Gentiles. He adds that it took several years before many of the Jewish believers really understood the place of the Gentiles in God’s program.<sup>24</sup>

In fact, the Gentiles apparently were not included in the great throng on the day of Pentecost. Instead, those present were “devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem.”<sup>25</sup> The apostles had not gone to all humankind yet. In fact, it is the Jews of the *diaspora* who were part of the great event that day, and they had come there on their own for their holy festival.<sup>26</sup> Jesus’ great commission had not been acted upon up to this point. Peter continued to witness to the devout Jews, and about three thousand of them were “cut to the heart” and were then baptized and added to the number in fellowship.<sup>27</sup>

As the book of Acts continues, both Paul and Peter receive clear messages regarding mission to the Gentiles. For Paul, it was a conversion experience in which he

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<sup>22</sup>Matthew 16:15, NRSV

<sup>23</sup>J. Swanson, electronic edition.

<sup>24</sup>W. W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), electronic edition.

<sup>25</sup>Acts 2:5

<sup>26</sup>J. F. Walvoord, R. B. Zuck, & Dallas Theological Seminary, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-1985), electronic edition.

<sup>27</sup>Acts 2:37, 41

was blinded by a great light and heard the voice of Jesus. Ananias, who helped Paul regain his sight, was also privy to this message, being told in his own vision that Paul had been chosen to bring Jesus' name to Gentiles and kings, as well as to the people of Israel.<sup>28</sup>

Peter also had a vision, one in which he saw a sheet being lowered from heaven, full of all sorts of four-footed animals, reptiles, and birds. He heard a voice telling him to get up, kill, and eat. His response was that he had never eaten anything unclean. The voice then told him that whatever God has made is clean. This vision happened three times. While he was thinking about what this meant, men sent by Cornelius (an Italian centurion from Caesarea) arrived with an invitation to visit Cornelius' home. When he visited the next day, Peter said to his host, "You yourselves know that it is unlawful for a Jew to associate with or to visit a Gentile; but God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean. So when I was sent for, I came without objection."<sup>29</sup>

Thus, as the account progresses in the Acts of the Apostles, these two began the mission to the Gentiles. Upon returning to Jerusalem (Acts 11), Peter reports his activities to the apostles and believers gathered there, while Paul sets out on his first missionary journey with Barnabas (Acts 13). The directions each received were clear. No one was to be excluded from access to God through Jesus Christ. Even more important, perhaps, was the instruction that it was not only necessary to share it with everybody and anybody, but the disciples were to *bring* that message to the people.

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<sup>28</sup>Acts 9:15

<sup>29</sup>Acts 10:28-29, NRSV

This instruction is as relevant today as it was then. Once we become believers, we cannot just sit in our churches waiting for others to join us. We, too, like Paul and Peter and all the disciples in the long history of the church who have followed in their footsteps, are called to bring that message outside the walls of our church. Our commission is to *make disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching* everyone. Indeed, we are still called to go, baptize, and teach the ἔθνος (*ethnos*).<sup>30</sup>

### Theological Foundations

As noted in the first chapter, the journey that led the author to the church context in which this project was implemented started when she was just a small girl, fifty years ago. It has been a slow and steady trip, with new revelations all along the way. The deepest conversations the author has had with God throughout this half-century expedition have always had one theme. That theme has been about unity in diversity, uplifting and celebrating the uniqueness and worth of each and every individual as a child of God. Accompanying this theme, however, has been the ever-present sorrow in her heart over humanity's inability to act accordingly. Instead, to her it seems that humans tend to build barriers between themselves and those whom they consider different. These barriers can be based upon a number of factors, such as difference in race, language, culture, or nationality. Variables such as these keep one group from accepting and including the other group. Barriers are erected due to an attitude of superiority on the part

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<sup>30</sup>J. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek New Testament* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), electronic edition.



of the barrier-builders. Inherent in this thinking is that human beings are not equally worthy because they are different, nor are they welcomed.

This type of thinking, unfortunately, may be found in the most unlikely place—church. James Cone, in his book *God of the Oppressed*, describes the contradictions he experienced growing up in Bearsden, Arkansas. He found the affirmation of faith on the part of the white residents there a *puzzlement*. He says that, although they thought of themselves as Christian people, and faithful servants of God, the whites excluded blacks, not only socially but also from their church services. He adds that he and his brother often discussed their desire to confront these Christians with the demands of the gospel by attending their church services so as to make them declare publicly that, in fact, all were *not* welcome in God's house.<sup>31</sup>

To clarify this last statement, however, one would have to say that Christians who hold to this thinking do not understand the church to be God's house. Nor do they understand that God works in and through the church to reach out to all. In fact, one could liken them to the Judaizers in the early church, who excluded the uncircumcised Gentiles from the promise of salvation through Jesus Christ. Eung Chun Park, in *Either Jew or Gentile: Paul's Unfolding Theology of Inclusivity*, refers to this as Jewish *particularism*. He notes that Paul, as his ministry and mission progressed, began to understand that Jewish *particularism* was outdated, and that there was no place for Judaizers in the church.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>James H. Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), 3.

<sup>32</sup>Eung Chun Park, *Either Jew or Gentile: Paul's Unfolding Theology of Inclusivity* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 55.

In contrast to *particularism*, says Park, *universalism* is the belief that the entire universe and all creatures in it are of care and concern of the deity. It is, he says, this universalistic religious thought that is the impetus of mission.<sup>33</sup>

Mission is more than the understanding that people of other cultures are of equal value to God. While this might lead to reaching out to give of one's self, or to help someone in need, it is not necessarily an equalizer. The giver may still consider the recipient as one of lower status. This means that barriers are still in place, and those barriers result in hurtfulness. Andrew Sung Park uses the Korean word *han* to describe such hurt. He defines *han* as the "critical wound of the heart generated by unjust psychosomatic repressions, as well as by social, political, economic, and cultural oppression."<sup>34</sup> We must instead, says Park, create an existential reality across racial barriers. This involves a "transmutation of the inward aspects of the person, community, and culture."<sup>35</sup> Park says that people must really *see* each other. By this he means that people must recognize and understand each other in such a way that constructive transformation occurs.<sup>36</sup>

The author's church has been good at doing mission throughout its history. It has also been relatively good at participating in various ecumenical services and outreach opportunities in the community. It has not, however, really *seen* its mission recipients or its fellow congregations as Park defines the word *seeing*—constructive transformation has not occurred.

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 10.

<sup>34</sup>Andrew Sung Park, *Racial Conflict and Healing: An Asian-American Theological Perspective* (Maryknoll, NY: 1996), 10.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 101.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., 139.

Each November, for about five years in the last decade, the White Plains community held ecumenical services on World Communion Sunday. Many of the participants looked forward to this larger church experience and the opportunity it afforded them to worship in new ways. Despite the overwhelming enthusiasm by this group, however, there was discontent on the part of a good number of other attendees, some of whom were in the author's congregation. These others were uncomfortable with the different liturgies and music used, or the manner in which the sacrament of Holy Communion was instituted each year. As a result, this service was discontinued.

This same discomfort with change can surface within a church, as well, and has in the author's church. When congregants voice statements such as, "We have never done it that way before," they are indicating that they do not want change in their church. They are also saying that the way things are is the *right* way, or the *only* way. This also means that they understand any other way to be the *wrong* way. This mindset can be, and often is, applied to any aspect of church life. It fosters exclusivity and egocentrism. It can keep a congregation from growing, both spiritually and numerically, for it does not welcome anything or anyone that might disturb the status quo. This is particularly true if new people bring with them differences in language, culture, nationality, skin color, education, or socioeconomic status. Many times, these people might be welcomed, but only if they fit themselves into the mold of the church they dare to visit. Even then, they might experience subtle messages that make them feel that they do not belong. This is as harmful to those inside the church as it is to those who are visiting. Church members who prescribe to this way of being Christian are out of sync with what it means to be a child of God.

Howard Thurman wrote that humanity's struggle on the planet has always been one of finding its way back to the Garden of Eden. Something deep within each human brings a remembrance that the intent of the Creator is that he or she must live in harmony within him or/herself, with other human beings, and with all of life. Thurman described this as a yearning for wholeness, for being at one with all creation.<sup>37</sup>

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. believed in actively seeking such harmony, as well. He called such a state of harmony the “beloved community,” where all people would live together in justice and peace. This way of thinking became ever clearer to him while taking a course under Dr. George Washington Davis at Crozer Seminary. There he was exposed to, and affected by a book called *A Theology of the Living Church*, by L. Harold DeWolf. This author wrote that “human existence is fundamentally social in character and . . . human solidarity is the goal toward which history evolves—man is essentially a social animal, and it is only within a context of fellowship and cooperation that an individual's character can evolve the way God intended it to evolve.”<sup>38</sup> Dr. King would go on to work self-sacrificially trying to make this understanding of Christian living a reality.

Desmond Tutu writes, “It is and always has been God's intention that we should live in friendship and harmony. That was the point of the story of the Garden of Eden . . . then the primordial harmony that was God's intention for all God's creation was shattered and a fundamental brokenness infected the entire creation. Human beings came

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<sup>37</sup>Howard Thurman, *The Search for Common Ground* (Richmond, IN: Friends United Press, 2000), 27-28.

<sup>38</sup>Kenneth L. Smith and Ira G. Zepp, Jr. *Search for the Beloved Community: The Thinking of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1974), 27.

to be at loggerheads, blaming one another and being at one another's throats. They were alienated from their Maker."<sup>39</sup> The result, he adds, is that we never feel quite at home in our world, and that there is a sense of nostalgia somewhere deep in each of us for the paradise that we have lost. In fact, he says that most of human history might be described as a God-directed quest for the harmony, friendship, and peace for which we appear to have been created. Bishop Tutu calls this an *ubuntu* existence. Somewhere deep inside of us, he says, we know that we are destined for a life better than we are now living. He points out that we catch a glimpse of this better existence every now and again, when we work together during natural disasters or tragic events. Then we experience a spirit of compassion and an amazing outpouring of generosity. Then we experience the bonds of a caring community. This is *ubuntu*.<sup>40</sup> This is foundational to how this author sees her own spiritual journey.

These philosophies speak of an intentional effort, born out of a deep-seated longing in each person's soul, to seek oneness with other humans. This first involves being in touch with one's own sense of worth as a child of God, and, in turn, understanding that every human being has the same, yet unique worth as a child of God. Then, it involves the strong desire to share relationship with any and all children of God. This leaves no room for building barriers based on difference of any kind.

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<sup>39</sup>Desmond Mpio Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1999), 263.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 263-264.

## Historical Foundations

The question then becomes, if we share this inner demand, why do we not live it? This question, to a large extent, has motivated this research project, causing this author to reflect upon how her church could be an agent of transformation, and be transformed itself in the process.

As history has shown, this type of universal wholeness has never been realized. We live in a multicultural world. If diversity exists between different cultures, and even within same cultures, can we find unity in diversity? It seems to be difficult even in the context of being the church. Despite the promise that “in [Christ] all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross,”<sup>41</sup> multicultural churches are rare. The United Church of Christ (UCC) website for the New York Conference highlights the phrase, “The United Church of Christ seeks to be Multiracial, Multicultural, Open and Affirming, and Accessible to All—A Church where everyone is welcome!” In 1993, a General Synod Pronouncement was ratified which calls on all settings of the UCC to confront racism and to become the multicultural and multiracial of Jesus Christ. A Multicultural and Multiracial Implementation Team was formed to represent the various constituencies of the church and assist Justice and Witness Ministries in empowering all congregations and settings to implement strategies that will move the UCC toward a greater realization of its multiracial, multicultural vision.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Colossians 1:19, RSV

<sup>42</sup>United Church of Christ—New York Conference, “Justice and Witness Ministries,” available from <http://www.uccny.org/justice/mrmc/> (accessed February 2, 2007).

While this is the ideal to which the UCC aspires, the truth is that multiculturalism is not often a reality in its churches. Only nine of the seventy-four churches in the New York City Metropolitan area are multicultural. One of the nine is Riverside Church, a visitor attraction which welcomes people from many nations. While it also serves a diverse membership, however, it lacks Latino representation at most levels of leadership. The other eight churches are all small churches which have become multicultural gradually, over time, with little effort on their part to do the same.

Chatterton Hill Church, where the author is pastor, is one of those eight churches. It has changed as its neighborhood has changed. In terms of that change, however, the neighborhood is always just one step ahead of the church. The church always seems to be trying to catch up and not knowing exactly how. This is true of many of the other metropolitan churches as well. Most UCC churches are just not ready or able to reach out to those who are different than they are. This is one aspect that this research project intends to address.

The church is now at the crossroads. The author believes, as Desmond Tutu describes, that God made us for togetherness, for friendship, for community, for family, and that we are created to live in a delicate network of interdependence. The challenge is that the church must first to learn how to break down the barriers. The congregation must take on the desire, as Tutu puts it, to “reverse the awful centrifugal force of alienation, brokenness, division, hostility, and disharmony,” and to understand that “God has set in motion a centripetal process, a moving toward the center, toward unity, harmony, goodness, peace, and justice, a process that removes barriers.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness*, 265.

The theological vision for harmonious existence of the created order finds its foundation in scripture. In both the Old and New Testament, this is clear.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### Hypothesis

The problem at the heart of this project was that the author's congregation had not yet begun to reach out to the growing Hispanic population surrounding the church. The author believed that, if her congregation were to participate in a series of workshops in which they could look at the church's rich history, review the demographics of the neighborhood, and examine their own talents and gifts for ministry, they would be motivated to reach out to those outside the church's doors. Further, if provided with the tools and framework in which to design and implement action plans, they would be empowered to engage in meaningful ministry to this population.

#### Ministry Project Design

This project was a single-case descriptive project. A qualitative pro-active research approach was used. In this method, the researcher is passionately involved with the product. Narrative descriptions emerge in which both the researcher and the participants are proactive participants in the study.<sup>1</sup> This design was chosen as it provided

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<sup>1</sup>William R. Myers, *Research in Ministry: A Primer for the Doctor of Ministry* (Chicago, IL: Exploration Press of Chicago Theological Seminary, 2000), 25.

the congregation an opportunity to actively participate in its own growth and transformation. It is a community empowerment model.<sup>2</sup>

Since this project was to serve as a pilot for use in the broader United Church of Christ (UCC) church community, the author and her Regional Conference Minister (RCM), the Reverend Michael Caine, worked closely on the design and implementation of the model. They began planning the program in mid-July 2006, which they entitled *Casting Your Nets* (also known as *CYN*). They agreed upon a three-session orientation format, with time between sessions to complete tasks explained and practiced at each session. Since Reverend Caine wanted to plan a statewide kick-off of the CYN initiative for January 27-28, 2007, a timeline was established to complete these three workshops at the author's church before that date. This pilot had a two-fold purpose. Firstly, the congregation would be asked to provide feedback as to the understandability and mechanics of the workshops. Secondly, the author wanted to determine if this model would result in a newfound motivation on the part of the congregation to reach out to its Hispanic neighbors. If so, it could serve as model for other UCC churches to meet the challenge of reaching out to those who reside in their neighborhoods.

Each of the three workshops was to take place on a Sunday afternoon, and would be preceded by a motivational Sunday morning worship service and lunch. The workshops were to be spaced over six to seven week intervals, taking place on October 15 and November 19, 2006, and January 7, 2007. These intervals were intended to allow time for the congregation to complete tasks assigned during the sessions. Results could then be reported, discussed, and evaluated at each subsequent session.

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<sup>2</sup>Davydd J. Greenwood and Morten Levin, *Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc, 1998.), 6.

In order to implement the three sessions, preparations needed to be made beforehand. These involved publicizing each event, creating forms, gathering resources and materials, arranging refreshments, and coordinating the delivery method with the Regional Conference Minister.

### **Preparations Made Prior to *Casting Your Nets Sunday #1***

A two-month time period was necessary to lay the groundwork for the implementation of the project. During this time, the following steps were taken:

- In August 2006, a brief overview of the project was described to key church leaders. The author asked for volunteers to assume the role of team leaders for the CYN Fishing Party ministry areas (Mission, Fellowship, Worship, Generosity, and Invitation). A handout describing these areas was discussed with the members (Appendix A). Nine volunteered, resulting in co-leaders in four of the areas. These leaders were asked to recruit members for their teams.
- An article was written for the September church newsletter (*The Chatterings*) to describe the project and invite everyone to attend the first *Casting Your Nets Sunday* on October 15, 2006. The newsletter was mailed on August 25, 2006 to all members and friends of the congregation (Appendix B).
- An overview of the project was given to the Church Council on September 19, and the members all gave their approval.
- A second article was then written for the October newsletter, which was mailed during the last week of September 2006 (Appendix C).

- In order to provide an initial introduction of *CYN* and motivate the congregation to participate, three sermons were delivered. The first was preached on August 27, 2006. It was entitled *More Than Enough*, based upon John 6:1-15, examining Andrew's role in the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand (Appendix D). The second, entitled *Fall Housekeeping*, was presented on September 3, 2006. Using Mark 7:1-8, 14-15, and 21-23, this sermon addressed getting rid of what does not work anymore, and trying things in a new way (Appendix E). The third, *Worldwide Communion*, was based upon James 2:1-18, and it discussed those who are excluded, or not yet invited, to the communion table (Appendix F). In addition, announcements were made each of those Sundays regarding the upcoming *Casting Your Nets* worship and workshop.
- *CYN* was discussed in various church venues, including the Saturday afternoon ESL classes, potluck suppers, group meetings, and during pastoral visits and phone calls.
- A worship bulletin was prepared, with appropriate liturgy and music. This loosely followed the traditional worship service format of the author's church, with more user-friendly subtitles for the various parts of the service (Appendix G).
- In place of a sermon, a powerpoint presentation was created. The author and the RCM felt that this would make the point, without words, that the church needs to keep up with the times. They also thought this would grab the attention of the audience in a different way than the traditional sermon. This presentation highlighted the need to become more current and comprehensible to people in a secular, consumerist society (Appendix H).

- Arrangements were made to provide lunch after the service. In keeping with the fishing theme, fried whiting was ordered. The author and her husband made potato salad and collard greens. For dessert, there was apple or peach pie.
- Materials were prepared for the after-lunch workshop. These included a skeleton timeline of the church's one-hundred-one-year history; and a very large city map, with various-colored push pins indicating the homes of members of the church, members of the Saturday afternoon ESL program, the Korean church members, other area churches, and institutions with which the church is involved. The timeline was drawn on a fifteen-foot long piece of architectural print paper. Both the timeline and map were displayed on the walls in the downstairs fellowship hall of the church for several weeks before the *CYN Sunday*. In addition, the descriptions of each of the five ministry areas were printed on large, sturdy poster boards, to be scattered throughout the room. Participants would be directed to sit in the area that most interested them, but advised that they could change groups whenever they wanted.
- On the morning of the service, the sanctuary was prepared by spreading a fish net over the altar, with a large woven basket on top. Fish shapes were cut out of construction paper. Each congregant was to be given two, so as to write the names of those they wanted their church to reach out to. Instructions would be given to place these in the basket during prayer time, along with the offering.

### **Implementing *Casting Your Nets Sunday #1 – Mapping the Church's Service Area***

After all the work involved getting ready for this first session, its implementation was relatively easy. The components of *CYN Sunday # 1* were the following:

- The worship service was conducted using the bulletin. The powerpoint presentation was projected on the front wall of the sanctuary, above the choir loft. The author led the various components of the service, and the RCM presented the powerpoint portion. The congregants were invited to write their prayers on their paper fish prior to the prayer portion of the service, and then to bring them up to put in the basket on the altar.
- Following the service, all were invited to go downstairs to the fellowship hall for lunch and the workshop. Every congregant did so.
- As dessert was served, the workshop began. The RCM asked for feedback regarding the powerpoint presentation. The author recorded their comments.
- An overview of the five ministry areas was given, using the descriptions on the posters. The members were introduced to the team leaders for each area. The members were encouraged to move to the area that piqued their interest for this session, noting that they could always move to a different area next time, after further consideration.
- The author introduced the participants to the skeleton timeline she had posted. This exercise was based upon a Carl Dudley model, the purpose of which is to invite conversation about past, present, and future change, allowing the

congregation to “imagine themselves into a new community.”<sup>3</sup> This fifteen-foot long mural included milestones achieved in the one-hundred-and-one year historical record of the church. Along the line were decade markers, as well as dates indicating installation of pastors, formation/dissolution of various groups and activities within the church, anniversary celebrations, revisions to the constitution and by-laws, repairs and remodeling of the facility, and the dates when two members joined (the one there the longest, and the newest member). During the ensuing discussion, other items were added, such when the church became integrated, as well as additional activities, such as vacation bible school, mission trips, church trips, dates for other mission work done by the church, and recent fundraising activities. The author announced that this timeline would be left up throughout the *CYN* pilot, and that members should feel free to add other items as they wished. She commended the group for their excellent work on this task, and summarized the activity by noting how much change had already occurred in the life of the church.

- Attention was directed to the city map. The purpose of this activity was to have the congregation determine the church’s service area. Although the author intended to use Dudley’s mapping strategy, with the congregation drawing out its service area, she decided instead to use a map created by the city of White Plains. The church had recently been part of this project, paying to be advertised on the map. This served the purpose of allowing the congregation to put good use to a project they had funded, and therefore, were already invested in. The author

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<sup>3</sup>Carl S. Dudley and Nancy T. Ammerman, *Congregations in Transition: A Guide for Analyzing, Assessing, and Adapting in Changing Communities* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 60.

explained the use of the colored push pins, and asked for feedback. The author advised the group that the map would be left up, and that the church had time to complete this exercise before the next workshop in October.

- The author asked for volunteers for three small groups which would be assigned follow-up tasks, to be completed for *CYN Sunday # 2*. The first group was assigned the job of researching and listing other agencies and institutions that the church is, or could be, involved with in the community. The second was asked to continue the discussion regarding the boundaries of the church's service area, using the map. The third was to review and be prepared to discuss the demographics of the target area. Several members volunteered for each of these groups.
- The final task was assigned to all present. Each was asked to choose an area of ministry that interested him or her before the next workshop.

### **Preparations Made Prior to *Casting Your Nets Sunday #2***

There was a five-week interval between *CYN Sunday #1* and *CYN Sunday #2*.

This time was used to make the following preparations:

- The author publicized the upcoming *CYN Sunday #2* at meetings and in conversations, and printed the date in the Sunday announcements each week. She also prepared an article for the November *Chatterings*, which was mailed out on October 27 (Appendix I).
- The author and the RCM met to plan the service. The worship liturgy was kept the same (Appendix J). The Hispanic and Korean ministers were asked to participate,



and a script was prepared to include them in the service (Appendix K). In addition, the RCM prepared a sermon entitled *A Glass Half Full* (Appendix L). The scripture was to be taken from various texts, and read in unison by the congregation. This was given the title *The Feeding of More Than 5000*, and was printed for insertion into the bulletin (Appendix M).

- The goal for the day was to have the congregation begin to realize the enormous pool of talents and assets it possessed for ministry. The workshop portion of the day was to be based upon Luther K. Snow's "quick and simple congregational asset-mapping experience."<sup>4</sup> The author and the RCM wrote a script for use during this exercise (Appendix N). The necessary materials (half a ream of printer paper cut into quarters, markers, pens, large newsprint easel paper, and masking tape) were gathered.
- The sanctuary was once again decorated with the fishnet draped over the altar. The fish-shaped prayer requests from *CYN #1* were scattered over the net, and the large basket was placed on top. More blank fish-shaped prayer papers were prepared, and placed in a smaller basket for distribution with the bulletins.
- Since the usual coffee hour fare at the church is a variety of sandwiches, the author decided to add tuna sandwiches to the menu, in keeping with the theme. She also provided goldfish crackers.

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<sup>4</sup>Luther K. Snow, *The Power of Asset Mapping: How Your Congregation Can Act on Its Gifts* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2004), 14-19.

### **Implementing *Casting Your Nets Sunday #2 – Mapping the Congregation's Assets***

The overall goal for this session was that the congregation would do a self-evaluation of all the talents and gifts it has for ministry, and how they could be used to reach out to new people to those in the service area. The day proceeded as follows:

- The worship service was conducted by four ministers—the author, the RCM, the Korean minister, and the Hispanic minister. Members of all three language groups of the church were present. The sermon was presented by the RCM in English, with translations provided as needed by other members in the congregation.
- The congregation moved downstairs to the fellowship hall for lunch. Members were directed to sit at tables by ministry action areas. Some participants had decided to change groups since *CYN Sunday #1*. The youngsters of the church had been present for the first workshop, but had not spoken up during the discussion. They were encouraged to be active participants this time.
- The workshop portion of the day was begun during dessert. The first activity involved asking the three teams formed at *CYN Sunday #1* to provide feedback on their assignments. The first team was to present a list of other churches, agencies, and institutions with which the church has been associated or could be associated with in the future. The second was the mapping team, which was to define the boundaries of the church's service area. The third was to review the demographics for the zip codes in this service area, based upon December 2006

percept reports (Appendix O).<sup>5</sup> Discussions were led by the author and the RCM for each of these reports.

- Each group was then given a stack of blank paper (copy paper cut into quarters), and pens. The RCM explained that he would read a list of questions, one by one (Appendix P). In response to these questions, the participants were to write down as many assets as they could, one per piece of paper, and pile them in the center of their group's area. The author would circulate the room as they did so, answering any questions they had.
- When this was completed, the groups were directed to spread out their papers so that they were all facing one way, and to move to one side of the table so that everyone could see them all. No sorting was to be done yet, either by handwriting or category. Directions were then given to begin to "connect the dots," putting gifts together to strengthen the church in their particular area of ministry. The participants were told to have fun with this exercise, and to be as creative as possible. The goal was to come up with one or two action plans. In addition, each group was to give their result a creative name. The author and the RCM circulated among the groups to answer questions and assist them in this task.
- After about eight minutes, the participants were given a two-minute warning. When the time was up, the groups were asked to stop so that each could report its results. A spokesperson from each group did so. Comments and discussion were encouraged.

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<sup>5</sup>Percept, "My Community—10 Facts," available from <http://link2lead.com/L2L/MyCommunity/10Facts.asp?m=Summary&r=S> (accessed December 7, 2006).

- The author then distributed and reviewed sample Action Plan forms (Appendix Q). The groups were told to use these as a guide in creating actual Action Plans within their ministry areas. Each group was asked to plan and institute at least one “baby step” action before the third *CYN Sunday*, which would take place in seven weeks, on Epiphany Sunday. They could build upon ideas that had surfaced during this workshop, or could use completely new ideas. The author advised that she would be available to help each group as needed, and that the form did not need to be completed as yet. It was to be used merely as a rough draft. The use and completion of this form would be explained on *CYN Sunday # 3*.

### **Preparations Prior to *Casting Your Nets Sunday #3***

The preparation on the part of the author and Reverend Caine for the third and final *CYN Sunday* involved only the worship service, as the major responsibility for planning was left to the five Action Teams. During this seven-week time period, the following preparations were made:

- The author prepared the worship service bulletin (Appendix R).
- The author prepared the sermon, based upon Luke 3:15-17, 21-22, entitled *Talented and Gifted* (Appendix S). The RCM would assist with the liturgy.
- The author touched based with all five action team leaders within the first week to ensure that they were working on their *baby steps* and to let them know that she was available if they needed assistance. Four of the five teams asked for her help with some of these changes.

- The night before the third session, the author made brunch casseroles for lunch the next day.

### ***Implementing Casting Your Nets Sunday #3 – Mapping the Congregation's Action Plans***

Following the worship service, the congregation moved downstairs for lunch and work. This session progressed as follows:

- The participants moved into their groups, and the RCM offered a prayer to bless the afternoon's work.
- The author distributed the appropriate blank Action Plan forms to each group. She then explained that she was aware that each group had done a tremendous amount of work since the previous session. The goal now was to put it down on paper. She further explained that, in the larger church model, this form would be completed before Action Plans were taken. In this pilot project, however, the task for the day was to create sample Action Plans, based upon work already done by each team. While the changes would be different in each ministry area, they should all have the same target area and population. The author led a very short discussion to determine what those were.
- The Action Teams spent approximately forty-five minutes discussing the actions they had taken and completing the first draft of the Action Plan forms. The form could accommodate three changes per team. The author and the RCM circulated the room, answering questions and assisting when necessary. This exercise took approximately forty-five minutes. Each team was able to complete its form as a

rough, handwritten draft. These were later typed up by the author for use in the state model (Appendix T).

- When all the teams were done, the author led a discussion in which each team shared what it had written on its form.
- The author and the RCM then asked the entire group for overall feedback on how these changes felt, and if the congregation thought there had been too many or that they had been too big.
- The author announced that the leaders of each team would be participating in the statewide kickoff later that month, and that *Casting Your Nets* would be an ongoing project in which the church would participate.
- The participants were thanked for their enthusiasm, willingness to take risks, commitment, and openness to change. The RCM added that their participation had helped shape the model to be used by the Conference, and thanked them on behalf of the Conference staff.

### Measurement of the Results

Since this project was to be based upon qualitative research, it would be, by nature, fundamentally interpretative. This means that the author, as researcher, would analyze the data and draw conclusions about its meaning through her own personal lens. This is an unavoidable consequence of qualitative data analysis.<sup>6</sup> This filter applies to all data collected and analyzed, as the author acts as both observer and participant in each

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<sup>6</sup>John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2003), 182.

data category chosen—participant observations, focus group interviews, individual interviews, and relevant documents.

### ***Participant Observations***

The participant observations were to be conducted by both the author and her context associate, who is also her Regional Conference Minister. The author, having served as pastor in the church setting in which the project was situated for sixteen years, was thoroughly acquainted with all aspects of the setting and the participants in the study. It was important, therefore, in order to ensure inter-rater reliability and legitimization of her observations, to have her context associate provide input as a participant observer, as well. Although he is familiar with the setting and the congregation, and they with him, his interpretation and analysis of the participants' reactions and the project's success on the local level is slightly more objective than hers.

It must be noted that the author enjoys a close working relationship with her entire congregation, and a good friendship with many in it. The participants, therefore, out of loyalty, were already somewhat invested in the success of the study. In addition, they were aware that she was observing and recording the results. Furthermore, they were advised that they were part of a pilot project that would be used in the New York Conference, and that they would be credited with whatever success it yielded. The author believed that all of these factors, therefore, might contribute to a more favorable result than might have been achieved with an unfamiliar study group and setting.

She also believed, however, that there were advantages to this close relationship.<sup>7</sup>

Because the author, as researcher, has firsthand experience with the participants, and has established a very trusting, open relationship with them, it was clear that each would be truthful and sincere in their reactions and responses, both positive and negative.

### ***Focus Group Interviews***

The author decided to use a focus group discussion as a second means of collecting qualitative data on the project. While focus groups cannot substitute for the type of data obtained by participant observation or individual interviews, they can provide valuable information not available through either. The main advantage of focus group data in comparison to participant observation is that the researcher is able to observe a large amount of interaction on the topic in a limited period of time. The disadvantage is that this forum is not the same as an unstructured conversation in a natural setting. The tenor of the discussion is set by the researcher.<sup>8</sup>

Six months after the completion of the pilot project, the author invited the leaders and co-leaders of each of the five Ministry Action teams to participate in a focus group discussion. The purpose was to collect feedback from these participants in order to assess the reliability of her interpretation of the effectiveness and success of the model.

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 186.

<sup>8</sup>David L. Morgan, *Focus Groups as Qualitative Research: Qualitative Research Methods Series 16* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc: 1997), 8.



In order to prepare for the discussion, the author developed a series of twelve questions, in five categories. Each had a distinct function in the flow of the focus group interview:<sup>9</sup>

The first category included opening questions. These questions were meant to draw everyone into the discussion, and were, therefore, designed to be answered simply and quickly (Appendix U, question 1).

The second category included introductory questions, which were designed to introduce the topic and get the participants to start thinking about their connection to the CYN project. These were designed as open-ended questions that would allow the participants to tell about how they understood the program when they first heard about it (Appendix U, questions 2 and 3).

The third category included transition questions, which were used to move the conversation into the key questions. They were meant to serve as the link between the introductory question and the key questions (Appendix U, question 4).

The fourth category was key questions. These questions are comprised of those that drive the study, and are meant to elicit data relevant to the effectiveness and success of the project, as understood by the participants (Appendix U, questions 5 through 9).

The fifth and final category was composed of ending questions. Three types are included in this category: the all-things-considered question, the summary question, and the final question. The all-things-considered question was used to determine the final position of the participants on the program. This allowed each participant to reflect upon what has been heard throughout the discussion, and then identify the most important

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<sup>9</sup>Richard A. Krueger and Mary Anne Casey, *Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2000), 44-46.

aspects. The summary question was asked after the author summarized what she heard in the participants' discussion of the key questions. The final question served to ensure that nothing had been overlooked in the discussion. (Appendix U, questions 10 through 12).

The nine Ministry Team leaders and co-leaders all agreed to participate, and arrived at the parsonage promptly on the scheduled evening. The author advised that she would be taping the discussion, which would later be typed verbatim and included as an appendix in her doctoral paper (Appendix V). She further explained that, while they would be recognized in the acknowledgement portion of her document, their names would not be published in the verbatim. She asked for permission to proceed. The author provided each participant with a printed list of the questions that would be asked, as a reference. All consented to continue with the discussion.

### ***Individual Interviews***

For further inter-rater reliability, the author chose to conduct an interview with the Hispanic minister and her husband, who both work with the Saturday afternoon Spanish-speaking group of the church. She also chose this couple because they have a vested interest in the success of the church's ministry to this population. She chose to interview them jointly in order to allow them to hear each other's remarks, and to be able to comment on them.

Prior to the interview, the author created a series of questions similar to those used in the focus group discussion. As in that setting, the purpose was to elicit and evaluate their perspective on the effectiveness and success of the pilot program, particularly in how it related to the congregation's attitude toward the Hispanics to whom

it ministers. The couple was advised that this would be recorded verbatim for the purpose of the author's doctoral work (Appendix W).

### ***Relevant Documents***

The documents relevant to data analysis for this pilot project include Action Plan Forms completed by each of the Ministry Action teams. As mentioned earlier, these were to be handwritten in draft form by each ministry team, and then later typed by the author for further use during the statewide model (Appendix T). The number of actions included on these forms, as well as their relevancy to the stated goal, would serve to measure the success of the project.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FIELD EXPERIENCE**

#### **Actual Implementation of the Project**

The following is a narrative description of the pilot project as taken from the field notes of the author, acting as participant observer. The Reverend Michael Caine, RCM, who was also a participant observer, served as corroborator of this piece of data collection so as to provide inter-rater reliability.

#### **Preparing for *Casting Your Nets Sunday #1***

The entire congregation was very interested in the author's doctoral studies, and had expressed its enthusiasm and willingness to help in any way necessary from the very beginning. When she described the proposed project to the key church leaders in mid-August 2006, they gave her their support. When she explained that she needed volunteers to assume the role of team leaders for the *CYN Fishing Party*, one for each of five ministry areas (Mission, Fellowship, Worship, Generosity, and Invitation), nine volunteered, resulting in co-leaders for four of the areas. This represents more than ten percent of the members of the church. These leaders were advised to begin inviting other members of the church to join their teams.

An article was written for the September church newsletter (*The Chatterings*) to describe the project and invite everyone to attend the first *Casting Your Nets Sunday* on October 15, 2006. The newsletter was mailed on August 25, 2006 to all members and friends of the congregation. After receiving the newsletter, various members of the congregation expressed enthusiasm and interest in discussions with the author.

An overview of the project was given to the Church Council on September 19, and the members all gave their approval. A second article was then written for the October newsletter, which was mailed during the last week of September 2006, again sparking interest and questions from various church members.

In order to provide an initial introduction of *CYN* and motivate the congregation to participate, three sermons were delivered, as listed previously. In addition, announcements were made each Sunday regarding the upcoming *Casting Your Nets* worship and workshop. This was also discussed at the Saturday afternoon ESL classes, and the women and children from that program were invited to attend, as well. Anticipation was building throughout the life of the church, as *CYN* was discussed at various gatherings by the author and members of her congregation.

### **Implementing *Casting Your Nets Sunday* #1 – *Mapping the Church's Service Area***

The service followed the worship bulletin without incident. The powerpoint presentation was projected on the front wall of the sanctuary, above the choir loft. The author led the various components of the service, and Reverend Caine presented the powerpoint portion. The congregants were invited to write their prayers on their paper fish prior to the prayer portion of the service, and then to bring them up to put in the

basket on the altar. The author observed that all members of the congregation were focused on the presentation, and that the atmosphere in the sanctuary was very positive.

Following the service, all were invited to go downstairs to the fellowship hall for lunch and the workshop. Every congregant did so.

The group enjoyed the lunch, and there was lively conversation going on throughout the room. As dessert was served, the workshop began. Reverend Caine asked for feedback regarding the powerpoint presentation. Various participants said that it was difficult to read the words superimposed on each slide at the same time the narrator was reading a different script. The author noted this for modification. The majority of those present expressed a positive reaction to the presentation. The author, as observer, noted that the participants were enthusiastic. Comments were that they found that the format of the presentation held their interest; they were pleased to hear that changes would be “baby steps”, and would take place slowly; the fact that they were just trying change rather than having change forced upon them was reassuring; and that they thought they could work with this program.

The author and Reverend Caine then provided an overview of the five ministry areas, using the descriptions on the posters. The members were introduced to the team leaders for each area. The members were encouraged to move to the area that piqued their interest for this session, noting that they could always move to a different area next time, after further consideration.

After everyone had chosen a spot and gotten situated, the author introduced the participants to the skeleton timeline she had posted. This exercise was based upon a Carl Dudley model, the purpose of which is to invite conversation about past, present, and

future change, allowing the congregation to “imagine themselves into a new community.”<sup>1</sup> This fifteen-foot long mural included milestones achieved in the one-hundred-and-one year historical record of the church. Along the line were decade markers, as well as dates indicating installation of pastors, formation/dissolution of various groups and activities within the church, anniversary celebrations, revisions to the constitution and by-laws, repairs and remodeling of the facility, and the dates when two members joined (the one there the longest, and the newest member). During the ensuing discussion, all were engaged, and eager to add their own names to the timeline. Other items added were the time frame when the church became integrated, as well as additional activities, such as vacation bible school, mission trips, church trips, dates for other mission work done by the church, and recent fundraising activities. The author announced that this timeline would be left up throughout the *CYN* pilot, and that members should feel free to add other items as they wished. She commended the group for their excellent work on this task, and summarized the activity by noting how much change had already occurred in the life of the church.

The next workshop activity involved a discussion based upon the city map. The purpose of this discussion was to have the congregation determine the church’s service area. Although the author intended to use Dudley’s mapping strategy, with the congregation drawing out its service area, she decided instead to use a map created by the city of White Plains. The church had recently been part of this project, paying to be advertised on the map. This served the purpose of allowing the congregation to put good use to a project they had funded, and therefore, were already invested in. The author

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<sup>1</sup>Carl S. Dudley and Nancy T. Ammerman, *Congregations in Transition: A Guide for Analyzing, Assessing, and Adapting in Changing Communities* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 60.

explained the use of the colored push pins, and asked for feedback. Church members noted that the majority of the membership resided within three miles of the church, and that a somewhat circular shape could be drawn around this grouping. This included several zip codes within the city, as well as several just beyond the city limits. About half the members, it was noted, lived within a zip code in a neighboring community, but within the three-mile radius. It was also noted that one family lived outside this imaginary boundary, even though this was still in another of the city's zip codes. In fact, this family resided closer to a sister church in a more upscale community. Although this family stated that the church's service area should extend that far during the discussion that day, others thought that the church should concentrate on a much smaller area, closer to the church. It was noted that there were plenty of people living "between the push-pins" within that area. The author and Reverend Caine advised the group that the map would be left up, and that the church had time to decide this before the next workshop in October.

As the first *CYN Workshop* ended, the author asked for volunteers for three small groups which would be assigned follow-up tasks, to be completed for *CYN Sunday* # 2. The first group was assigned the job of researching and listing other agencies and institutions that the church is, or could be, involved with in the community. The second was asked to continue the discussion regarding the boundaries of the church's service area, using the map. The third was to review and be prepared to discuss the demographics of the target area. Several members volunteered for each of these groups. One person, mentioned previously as a member of the family on the outskirts of the map, in fact, volunteered for the mapping group. Interestingly, she reported back to the author by the



following Sunday that she had reconsidered, and that she and the group had decided that where she lived should not be part of the service area.

The final task was assigned to all present. Each was asked to choose an area of ministry that interested him or her before the next workshop. The author and Reverend Caine sincerely thanked everyone present for their enthusiastic participation and a job well done.

### **Preparing for *Casting Your Nets Sunday #2***

As soon as *CYN Sunday #1* was finished, the author began to publicize the upcoming *CYN Sunday #2*. In addition to mentioning this at meetings and in conversations, the date was printed in the Sunday announcements each week. She also prepared another article for the November *Chatterings*, which was mailed out on October 27. In subsequent conversations with members, the author noted that they already seemed motivated, and were excited about what would happen next. In addition, it was noticed that worship attendance was improving. Members who might have missed a service or two in the past were now attending every Sunday. This was true at other events, as well, such as the monthly potluck supper, and various meetings.

The author and Reverend Caine invited the Hispanic and Korean ministers to participate in worship for this second Sunday. They prepared a script to include them in the service. Both were very excited about the combined worship experience, and promised the author that they would ensure that their constituents would attend.

The goal for the day was to have the congregation begin to realize the enormous pool of talents and assets it possessed for ministry. The workshop portion of the day was

to be based upon Luther K. Snow's "quick and simple congregational asset-mapping experience."<sup>2</sup> The author and Reverend Caine followed the script they had written for this exercise, as described previously. The necessary materials (half a ream of printer paper cut into quarters, markers, pens, large newsprint easel paper, and masking tape) were gathered.

Since the usual coffee hour fare at the church is a variety of sandwiches, the author decided to add tuna sandwiches to the menu, in keeping with the theme. She also provided goldfish crackers.

The sanctuary was once again decorated with the fishnet draped over the altar. The fish-shaped prayer requests from *CYN #1* were scattered over the net, and the large basket was placed on top. More blank fish-shaped prayer papers were prepared, and placed in a smaller basket for distribution with the bulletins.

### **Implementing *Casting Your Nets Sunday #2 – Mapping the Congregation's Assets***

The service again followed the worship bulletin without incident. The congregation consisted of members and friends from all three language-speaking groups within the life of the church. After service, all present moved downstairs to enjoy lunch and begin the workshop.

The three teams reported back on their assignments from the first workshop. The first team, consisting of two women, put up a poster which listed other churches, agencies, and institutions with which the church has been associated or could be associated with in the future. One of the two, acting as team spokesperson, noted that it

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<sup>2</sup>Luther K. Snow, *The Power of Asset Mapping: How Your Congregation Can Act on Its Gifts* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2004), 14-19.

was interesting that, while many churches had declining numbers, there were still new churches opening up in the area. They reviewed the various social service agencies, all of which were bilingual, and ready to address the growing Hispanic population. They discussed the schools in the area, mentioning that there were high numbers of students from Hispanic families in this area. They mentioned agencies that worked with young families with small children, as well. They then reviewed the category of local employers. Finally, they discussed the fact that there are various agencies that specifically exist to address the issues of Hispanic immigrants, but that it was difficult to find how these are related to each other. In addition, it seemed that there was no agency in particular that was favored over another by the Hispanic immigrants.

The team spokesperson then advised that while the church is not so well connected to very many of these agencies, the team suspected that individual members of the church might be. The team felt it might be useful to do an inventory of the members' individual associations. As an example, she cited the fact that some members of our church are involved with sororities, mentoring programs, the Old Guard of White Plains, and other volunteer organizations. She thought this might be an avenue to explore in the future.

The mapping team, comprised of the church's male ministerial intern student and two women, advised that they had quickly narrowed down the service area to that which serviced the majority of the congregation currently. They did not feel that it would be feasible to reach out to the more remote areas where only a few of the members live. While those members might be able to invite others to church, they felt that the area in the immediate vicinity would yield enough mission work and non-churched, potential

members. This is approximately a three-mile radius. They added that they felt the two-mile radius extending past the first three was closer to other UCC churches. Reverend Caine asked for feedback from those gathered. All agreed with this opinion.

The final task for the day involved reviewing the demographics of the zip codes from this very same map, as well as several zip codes in which the author knew members of the church reside. These statistics were taken from a December 2006 Percept report (Appendix O)<sup>3</sup>, and had been drawn by three church members, with the assistance of the author, on another fifteen-foot-long piece of architectural paper. This chart had been on display for several weeks. Members of the church had shown interest in it already, and were eager to talk about it that day. This activity resulted in a very lively discussion, as the members expressed their surprise at the extremely high growth rate of the Hispanic population in the church's area. It was noted that the church is being called to address the need of this population, and that the time had urgently come to do so. The author announced that this resource would remain on display for the life of the pilot project, as well.

Those present sat in five specific areas, based upon the ministry area they had chosen. Some participants had decided to change groups since *CYN Sunday # 1*. The youngsters of the church had been present for the first workshop, but had not spoken up during the discussion. They were actively involved, however, in this second *CYN* event.

Each group was given a stack of blank paper (copy paper cut into quarters), and pens. Reverend Caine explained that he would read a list of questions, one by one. In response to the questions, the participants were to write down as many assets as they

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<sup>3</sup>Percept, "My Community—10 Facts," available from <http://link2lead.com/L2L/MyCommunity/10Facts.asp?m=Summary&r=S> (December 7, 2006).

could, one per piece of paper, and pile them in the center of their group's area. The author circulated throughout the room as they did so, answering questions, and encouraging and laughing with people. The participants expressed surprise and pleasure at the variety and number of gifts they were able to provide for each question (Appendix P).

When this portion of the exercise was completed, the groups were directed to spread out their papers so that they were all facing one way, and to move to one side of the table so that everyone could see them all. No sorting was to be done yet, either by handwriting or category. Directions were then given to begin to "connect the dots," putting gifts together to strengthen the church in their particular area of ministry. The participants were told to have fun with this exercise, and to be as creative as possible. The goal was to come up with one or two action plans. In addition, each group was to give their result a creative name. Again, the author circulated among the groups to answer questions and assist them in this task. Reverend Caine did the same.

The room was alive with conversation, laughter, and activity. After about eight minutes, Reverend Caine gave a two-minute warning. When the time was up, the groups were asked to stop so that each could report its results.

The Mission group reported first. They had titled their action plan "Faith, Food, Friends." This would involve reaching out to family and friends with food and faith. Since food is something around which people gather, they said this would be a food ministry. The church could have people come in for food, or could take food out to them. While doing so, the congregation could share its faith as it fed them.

The Fellowship group had named their action plan "Growing Fellowship." Since the congregation had several special education teachers and nurses, this group thought

that the church could find a special needs family and help them with cleaning house, praying with them when visiting, helping to educate the children, and assist the parents in any other way needed.

The Invitation group included most of the Hispanic ladies from the Saturday afternoon ESL group of the church, the Hispanic minister that works with them, and just a few of the English-speaking members of the main congregation. This group named their action plan “Flowers of the Spirit.” Since they recognized the gift the church had given them by hosting English classes for two years, they decided that this partnership could be strengthened by doing a useful activity together. They suggested inviting a group of people, both church members and Spanish-speaking people from the neighborhood, to a flower arranging class. Earlier, they had overheard someone in another group say that she was talented in this area. The ladies felt that if people from the main congregation could come and teach them how to make corsages, much would be accomplished. The class would provide valuable time to practice bilingual conversation, and an opportunity to get to know each other better. In addition, the corsage-making itself would be a marketable skill, or corsages could be made and given to visitors who come to church.

The Generosity group called its action plan “Assets Ministry.” This would involve gathering assets and sharing assets with those in need. Some of these assets could be tangible, such as clothing and food, while others could be intangible gifts, such as education or prayers.

The Worship group had not named their results, but reported that their action would be to do something “different” for the next six weeks during the church service. Drama was already planned throughout Advent and Christmas. They had decided that

they wanted to add more music by the young people of the church, as well. They felt that they should advertise this and invite more people in to share in this new worship experience. Since many of the gifts in their collection had to do with cooking, baking, and cake-decorating, they thought that they might bake cookies, and take them around the neighborhood with flyers or door-knockers advertising the upcoming worship services. They might also be able to invite people in on Saturday afternoons for knitting classes, during which time they could talk about our Christmas season worship plans.

The author and Reverend Caine commended the participants for their ingenuity and creativity. Reverend Caine then explained that this was just meant to be a fun exercise, the purpose of which was to get everyone thinking about how many gifts and talents there were in the church, and how they might be used. The author then distributed and reviewed sample Action Plan forms (Appendix Q). The groups were told to use these as a guide in creating actual Action Plans within their ministry areas. Each group was asked to plan and institute at least one “baby step” action before the third *CYN Sunday*, which would take place in seven weeks, on Epiphany Sunday. They could build upon ideas that had surfaced during this workshop, or could use completely new ideas. The author advised that she would be available to help each group as needed, and that the form did not need to be completed as yet. It could be used as a rough draft, as the appropriate use and completion of this form would be the focus of *CYN Sunday # 3*.

Reverend Caine thanked the participants for their enthusiasm and hard work. Then he offered a prayer to bless the action planning yet to unfold, and ended with a benediction.

### **Preparing for *Casting Your Nets Sunday* #3**

The preparation on the part of the author and Reverend Caine for the third and final *CYN Sunday* involved only the worship service, as the major responsibility for planning was left to the five Action Teams. It was decided that the author would do the sermon, with Reverend Caine assisting with the liturgy.

The author planned to be available to help the teams, but only if asked to do so. She conveyed this to all five action team leaders, and then touched base with them within the week to ensure that they were working on their “baby steps.” Each team was enthused, and had already begun to set several of these changes into motion. Some of them happened before the third *CYN* workshop, while others were planned out and scheduled to be implemented soon afterwards.

On Tuesday evening, two days after the second *CYN* workshop, the church Trustees held their meeting. The main purpose of this meeting was to prepare for the Annual Meeting of the church, which would be held on the last Sunday of January. During this meeting, the congregation elects officers and votes on the Annual Budget. The Chair of the Trustees is also a co-leader on the Generosity Action Team. She led a discussion, along with the Treasurer, regarding the possibility of hiring a Hispanic minister one day each week to assist with the church’s Latino ministry. The author pointed out that this was not just a “baby step.” Instead, she noted, it was an important statement that the church was open and willing to reach out to the community. This was especially true given the small size of the congregation and its budget, which only supports a part-time minister. It was also noted that a line item needed to be added in the



special funds section of the budget to accommodate for the Hispanic group's weekly collection.

The Chair then led another discussion regarding complete renovation of the church kitchen. This discussion had been started almost five years earlier, and monies had begun to be collected for this project at that time. Throughout the previous five years, attempts had been made to get this project up and running, to no avail. There had not been enough money raised to do the whole kitchen to date, and the Trustees were not willing to approve doing the job step by step.

At this meeting, however, the Chair of the Trustees highlighted the fact that there had been much discussion during the *CYN* workshop two days earlier about cooking and feeding people. This had been identified as a real gift of the church in all five groups. The Trustees then began to discuss this situation again in earnest, and within about thirty minutes decided to approve the renovation, taking money from the endowment fund to do the work. It was mentioned that *CYN* had taught them that hoarding what the church has is not scriptural. It was time to become more generous with what the church had. It was further noted that a functional kitchen would allow the church to feed people both physically and spiritually.

The following week, the Trustees recommended both the hiring of the Hispanic minister and the renovation of the kitchen to the Church Council. The Council agreed with these actions. A special congregational meeting was called to propose the kitchen renovation. The other recommendation, which involved a salary item, was presented to the whole congregation at the Annual Meeting. The membership expressed their "generosity" by approving both actions unanimously.

The Mission Action Team, in the meantime, had decided to find a way to arrange transportation for bringing members in nursing homes to church. One of the members of this team was the church's ministerial student intern. He contacted the nursing home, made the arrangements, and two weeks later brought one of these members to church. It was an exciting moment for this elderly man, as well as for the congregation.

The Mission Action Team also decided that the church needed to reach out to more young people. A Christmas caroling evening was planned for the next month. This effort was shared with the Invitation Team, which was enlisted to help invite young people from the neighborhood, the ESL class, and the overall community. The author worked with the Mission Action Team to help plan this event. She suggested inviting the autistic students from her middle-school class, as well. The team felt that this would certainly be a wonderful way to reach out in mission to this population.

At the same time, the Invitation Action Team had already planned a meeting, and invited the author to join them. The team had decided to do more advertising of the church, saying that it felt that the church was the "best kept secret in town." The author worked with the Invitation Action Team to prepare UCC door-knockers to be distributed during the caroling. Attached to each was a flyer advertising all the upcoming events, as well as the schedule for the Christmas services.

In addition, the team asked the author to assist in designing a new church brochure. During this planning session, one of the team members noted that the church should create more groups before printing this brochure, so that there would be activities to invite others to join. A new Men's Fellowship was suggested. The ministerial student intern was approached to take on this responsibility. He worked with the author

immediately to create a list of potential members. He then contacted each, and scheduled the first meeting for after the holidays, on January 19. This group planned a Men's potluck for Valentine's Day, and asked the Invitation Action Team to advertise it for them.

It was also decided that a Women's Group would be organized, and that this would be published in the brochure, as well. The first Monday of each month was set for the meeting time. As the women were already busy working on a fundraising project for the church, it was decided that this new group should begin in May. This has since begun, and operates thus far as a fellowship group rather than a service group.

The Invitation Action Team also planned to contact the local paper and cable show to advertise. This was done immediately, and all activities have been published since January. In addition, both the author and her Korean ministerial colleague were jointly interviewed on an hour-long local cable talk-show in April. They talked about the history, programming, mission, and personality of the church.

The Worship Action Team was also very busy. The team asked the author to join their meeting, as well. The team felt that music should be added that would attract young people. The team suggested that the author negotiate this with the teenagers during Confirmation class the following Saturday. The youngsters agreed to lead praise music for twenty minutes prior to worship each Sunday morning. This was presented to the Deacons for approval, and instituted within the month.

The Worship Action Team asked the author to help them plan and offer multicultural, multilingual services for special occasions. They wanted this to occur at least once per quarter. Plans began for a special service on Korean New Year, February

18. All four ministers were to take part, with parts of the service done in three languages. The Korean minister was asked to do a special presentation on Korean culture, and to lead the traditional Korean *Blessing of the Children*. A Korean meal was catered for this event, as well. The *Blessing* took ninety minutes, during the meal. This was done by one of the members of the Fellowship Action Team, who called each child forward individually, spoke about that child's particular gifts and unique personality, and assured the child of how valuable he or she is in the life of the church. Then, according to tradition, the child bowed down, and was then blessed and presented with an envelope containing a small amount of money. All present were moved by the experience, and all stayed for the entire program.

The Fellowship Action Team had made plans of its own, as well. Based upon the assets mapping exercise done during *CYN Sunday # 2*, it decided to put the flower-arranging class into action right away. This was planned this for Saturday, December 9. The team asked the author to tell the ESL group that they would come and teach them how to make corsages. The author mentioned that she would be away that day. The team said that they did not need her help, and wanted to do it before Christmas. The leader ordered and paid for flowers, enlisted others to join the team, and led the workshop as planned. The team reported that everyone had a wonderful time, and that the ESL ladies would be making small Christmas arrangements for sale in church for the next Sunday. In this way, they said, the ladies would begin to feel empowered and would start their own operating fund within the church budget.

In addition, some members of the Fellowship Action Team decided to attend the Saturday afternoon sessions and knit with the ESL ladies after their English class. In this

way, they felt that they would get to know each other better, and the ladies would feel more comfortable during our multicultural, multilingual services. In addition to the fellowship this would provide, it would give more opportunities for both groups to practice speaking each other's language.

A few days before *CYN Sunday #3*, the author prepared the bulletin (Attachment R) and her sermon, entitled *Talented and Gifted*, which was based upon Luke 3:15-22 (Attachment S). She made brunch casseroles the night before. All was now ready.

### **Implementing *Casting Your Nets Sunday #3 – Mapping the Congregation's Action Plans***

Reverend Caine called the night before *CYN Sunday #3* to say that he had an emergency to tend to in another church in the area. He would not be present for the worship service, but would be at church in time for the workshop portion of the day. The author, therefore, led the entire worship service. The congregation then moved downstairs for lunch, and to begin work. Reverend Caine arrived just as the workshop started.

The participants moved into their groups, and Reverend Caine offered a prayer to bless the afternoon's work. The author distributed the appropriate blank Action Plan forms to each group. She then explained that she was aware that each group had done a tremendous amount of work since the previous session. The goal now was to put it down on paper. She further explained that, in the larger church model, this form would be completed before Action Plans were taken. In this pilot project, however, the task for the day was to create sample Action Plans, based upon work already done by each team. While the changes would be different in each ministry area, they should all have the same target area and population. The author led a very short discussion to determine what those

were. The group quickly agreed that this should be Spanish-speaking neighbors, Koreans in the area, and young people and elderly in the neighborhood.

Although some of the teams had taken more than three action steps, the author explained that the form accommodates only three changes to be tried by each team. Since this would only serve as a sample for the wider church, therefore, each team would record only three or less.

Each team got to work completing its form. Reverend Caine and the author circulated the room, answering questions and assisting when necessary. This exercise took approximately forty-five minutes. Each team was able to complete its form as a rough, handwritten draft. These were later typed up by the author for use in the state model (Appendix T).

When all the teams were done, the author led a discussion in which each team shared what it had written on its form. All five Action Teams, despite the busyness of the season, had taken major steps toward instituting change in the church. In addition, they had consulted with each other to ask for help, realizing that the tasks they proposed overlapped with another team's responsibility. This was beyond what the author and Reverend Caine expected to happen, both in terms of number of changes, and size of those changes.

Reverend Caine and the author then asked the entire group how these changes felt, and if the congregation thought there had been too many or that they had been too big. Various participants expressed their amazement that the teams had accomplished so much in such a short time, and that they were proud of their work. They were pleased

with the changes that had been instituted to date, and were excited about those scheduled for implementation in the next weeks and months.

### Results of the Focus Group Interview

The focus group was composed of the nine leaders and co-leaders of the five Ministry Action Teams. All had volunteered to serve in this capacity. While they were very different in terms of age, background, length of time in the church, and culture, it should be noted that all were women. If the author had intentionally chosen these leaders, she would have ensured that there was a male presence. Since she did not want to interfere with this during the pilot project, she allowed all who volunteered to do so. This is an item for future consideration, since the project attempts to empower the laity for ministry.

The author was pleasantly surprised at how easy it was to gather this group together for the purpose of the discussion. All seemed eager to participate, and some put aside other commitments or rearranged schedules to be present. Upon arrival, they greeted one another warmly. It is important to note that several of these women had not previously been active in the church, and had not always attended the church regularly prior to the project. This was no longer the case.

It should also be noted that this focus group discussion did not occur until six months after the pilot program had been completed. Additional changes, therefore, had taken place since that time, all with great success. One of those changes was the creation of a new Women's Group, which all but one of the focus group participants had attended. This allowed for a greater level of fellowship amongst the participants.

In addition, the statewide model had been implemented two weeks after completion of the local pilot project. The three weekend retreats, modeled after the three *Casting Your Net Sundays* in the pilot project took place January 20 – 21, April 21 – 22, and June 2 – 3. Eighteen churches from across the state of New York participated, each sending its pastor and Action Team leaders. The members of the focus group had attended, and had been highlighted as experts. They received many congratulations and expressions of gratitude for their help in developing such a project. There is no way to ascertain how much influence this experience had on the members of the focus group. While motivation and enthusiasm had been apparent throughout the pilot project, the author must assume that this exposure added to their attitudes and commitment to the project. The members of the focus group had also benefited from hearing stories of what their corresponding ministry teams were doing in other churches. Attending this gathering, may, in fact, have been a *tipping point* for the focus group.

In his book of the same name, Malcolm Gladwell describes the tipping point as a phenomenon in which a major change happens suddenly and unexpectedly. In his discussion of how religious movements get started, he notes that the Methodist movement became an epidemic in England and North America in the 1780s. He says that this was not because its founder, John Wesley, was a charismatic evangelist. It was due, instead, to his understanding that, “to bring about fundamental change in people’s belief and behavior, a change that would persist and serve as a model to others, [one] needed to create a community around them, where those beliefs could be practiced and nurtured.”<sup>4</sup> This is exactly the premise of *Casting Your Nets*, and the focus group had already been

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<sup>4</sup>Malcom Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 2000), 172-173.



part of such a community. In addition, it cannot be discounted that the members of the group had all mentioned to the author that they were anxious to have her complete her paperwork and graduate.

As the group gathered, therefore, spirits were already high. They were aware that they were being taped, and that their conversation would be published verbatim. All were eager to take part.

As noted earlier, the discussion lasted ninety minutes. To assist the participants, each had a copy of the questions that were to be asked. Again, the structure seemed quite like a classroom, with the responders speaking in turns, clockwise, to the author's reading of the questions. The author was not surprised by this, as six of the nine are employed in the field of education. There were twelve questions asked. By question four, this structured manner of answering was abandoned, as the responders began to react and comment upon each other's answers. This happened spontaneously, without direction from the author.

The opening question was a simple question, designed to draw each member of the group into the discussion. In the short response required, each person named the Ministry Action team she led or co-led, said how long she had been in the church, and what she liked best about the church. Most mentioned that they liked the church for its small size, warmth, and family-like quality. Two commented on the role of the minister. While these last two seemed sincere, it must be noted that the author is that minister, and was conducting this discussion.

The next two questions were introductory questions, designed to allow the responders to start thinking about their connection to the project. Specifically, the author

was interested in determining how well they understood the scope of the project when they first learned about it, and what impact they thought it would have on the church.

Each understood that the project was fundamentally about evangelism, or reaching out to seek new members. They thought that the project would provide a framework to do so. One thought it would help to get members more involved, while another thought it would help members build more faithful relationships with God. While all of these participants voiced positive reactions to the program from its onset, one said she had misgivings at first. Her response reflected one that the author and her Regional Conference Minister had anticipated when designing the model—that of fear of change when new people come into an established church. This had not been voiced by anyone, whether as an active or passive participant, before this discussion. The author noted this, realizing that perhaps not all opinions had yet come to light in the church.

The fourth question was a transition question, designed to provide a bridge to the key questions that would follow. Each responder was asked to comment on what she thought her particular ministry area group was supposed to accomplish when she first took over her position. The author expected to learn, through this question, whether the women's understanding of their ministry areas were in line with the definition created by herself and the Regional Conference Minister. She also wanted to determine what impact was imposed on the Action Teams by the women's understanding of the definition, and what impact that had upon their role as leaders and co-leaders.

The Mission Team leader's response indicated that she brought her own bias to the team due to her understanding of the word *mission*. She had been involved as a participant in the previous minister's doctoral studies, the purpose of which was to create

and implement a Mission Statement. She thought that her team's responsibility was to work on implementing that particular Mission Statement. Despite her misunderstanding, however, her team did fulfill its role appropriately. The author determined that this was because this woman lives her life in line with the project design definition of mission. Her efforts as leader mirrored her mission lifestyle. This misunderstanding, however, was important to note, and is one to watch for as the project reaches a wider audience.

There was some confusion on the part of the leader and co-leaders of the Generosity Team, as well. The leader serves as Chair of the Board of Trustees, and one of the co-leaders has served in that capacity in the past. They thought that this team's responsibility was equivalent to stewardship, or, in other words, increasing the amount of pledges. The other co-leader, formerly uninvolved in the church, had wanted to work on fundraising activities for years, but had been too busy. She assumed that that was the goal of this team. Each of the three mentioned that their initial understanding had changed.

The leaders and co-leaders of the other three teams—Worship, Fellowship, and Invitation—had understood the purpose of their respective teams as defined by the program design. For example, one of the Invitation Team leaders expressed how proud she was of her church, while the other said she had found the church on the internet. Both wanted to ensure that the community knew that the church exists and what it is all about.

The author realized that the goals of these three teams are probably easier to understand than the first two, particularly in a small, friendly congregation that already does a good job with invitation, worship, and fellowship. The other two, mission and generosity, which have typically involved financial giving in previous efforts in the

church, had taken on a different dimension for this project. The author noted that more time should be spent introducing and describing the function of these teams.

The next five questions were designed as key questions, meant to elicit data relevant to the effectiveness and success of the project as understood by the responders. The first key question was aimed at determining what each responder found interesting, surprising, or useful during the first *CYN Sunday*. The powerpoint presentation, the community mapping exercise, and the timeline exercise were named in the question. The author felt this information would be useful in evaluating modifications to be made.

Two members of the group said that they were not present that day. The rest of the group had mixed feelings about the powerpoint presentation. Some liked it and found it held their attention, while others were not comfortable with it, as it did not feel traditional enough.. Everyone enjoyed the timeline exercise, and felt that it was both interesting and useful in providing a sense of history and the current congregation's place in it. There were only two comments about the mapping exercise, both favorable. The author determined that none of these comments warranted changes to the project.

The second key question was very similar, but pertained to the second *CYN Sunday*. The question contained reminders about the sermon, feedback from the three assignments, and the asset mapping exercise. Again, the author wanted to determine what the responders found interesting, surprising, or useful.

The first responder commented on the sermon, which really caught her attention. This was the only comment on that portion of the day. There were no comments on the feedback portion of the day. The group had only vague recollections of the asset mapping exercise, and asked the author to read the questions that had been used. Once they heard

the questions, they began to remember and respond. Two themes emerged. First, they felt rushed. The author advised that she and the Regional Conference Minister had felt that way, too. She noted that perhaps this was why it was hard for the group to recall. The other theme that emerged was that the participants felt that they had gotten to know each other better through this exercise. The author observed this to be an added benefit to the program. Given that the setting is a close-knit family-style church, where everyone knows each other well, this program still has the ability to enhance relationships.

The third key question was similar to the first two, but focused on the third *CYN Sunday*. It included a description of the day's activity, which was to complete Action Plan Forms. The author wanted to target how interesting, surprising, or useful the responders found this exercise.

Three of the nine responders had not been present that Sunday. The rest expressed their *surprise*. This was the word repeatedly during the conversation. They were surprised not only by what their own group had accomplished, but at how much the other groups had accomplished, as well. They were also surprised at how quickly it had all happened. One also expressed surprise at learning the focus of the Generosity Action Team, as she had understood the term to mean something completely different. The author noted that this was similar to the misunderstanding expressed earlier by the Generosity Action Team leader and co-leaders, realizing again that the terms need to be better defined up front.

This conversation segued quite naturally into the key question that followed, about using *baby steps* in this project. The author designed this question to reinforce what she had heard from the participants at the first *CYN Sunday* regarding this, which is fundamental to the project itself. At that time, the participants, meaning the entire

congregation, had expressed that they thought the use of slow, small changes would be easier to tolerate and less threatening. The author expected to hear this again in this setting. While this was reiterated by the first few responders, the group quickly began to speak about the disadvantages to this method. They felt that the use of small, gradual steps would stall the process in many churches that were not as flexible and open to the idea of change. They felt that their own church was eager for change and that small steps would frustrate them, noting that they had taken big steps instead. The theme of risk-taking emerged as necessary to the project. The author noted this theme for later use.

The last key question was designed to determine how the responders, as leaders, felt about the accomplishments of their individual teams. The author found their answers to be unassuming, as they credited each other's groups for helping to implement their goals. One responder referred to the accomplishments as a collective effort on the part of all the groups.

Three ending questions remained. The first of these was an all-things-considered question, designed to determine the final position of the responders in regards to the project. It asked how they would describe the program and its affect on the church to someone in a sister church. Answers included that it motivated the church to action; got everyone involved; helped the congregation to know each other better; and opened the church up to accepting different ideas and different cultural groups. One responder summarized the program by saying that she thought everyone wanted the church to grow in all areas, but that nobody knew how to make that happen. She felt that the program gave the church a purpose, framework, direction, and organization to do so.

The purpose of the second ending question was to summarize all that had been discussed. Before asking the question, the author briefly recapped what she thought had been said, and asked the group how well she had captured it all. One person spoke for the group, saying she thought the author had done very well, and had not left anything out.

The final question was to ask if there was anything that should have been said, but was missed. Three of the responders, answering in unison, said there was not.

Although the author realized, upon reviewing the audio tape, that there could have been more detailed questions asked, she felt this conversation revealed that the participants agreed with her overall view of the success of the program. It also highlighted slight modifications and enhancements that would be beneficial in the future use of the model.

### Results of the Individual Interviews

For further validation of the effectiveness of the pilot study within its specific context, the author chose to interview the Hispanic minister and her husband. As they both work with the population targeted by outreach during this study, she felt it would be beneficial to ascertain, from their perspective, if there had been any change in the relationship between the congregation and the Spanish-speaking neighbors during this pilot project. As each has a different relationship and history with this population, she wanted to interview them both. She interviewed them together so as to allow them to hear and comment on each other's remarks.

The questions were designed prior to the interview, and were similar in nature to those used with the focus group. The author advised the couple that she would be

recording their discussion and that it would appear verbatim in the documentation of the study.

The advantage of this format was that it allowed the author to glean information from those most invested in the success of the program. The two also had firsthand knowledge of how the target population felt about what had occurred. Since the author is not fluent in the language of this group, this would serve to give her a glimpse of what had been revealed to the interviewees by them over the life of the project.

The disadvantages were, therefore, that this information would be indirectly received. In addition, it would be subject to the bias of the interviewees.<sup>5</sup>

It is important to note that this interview was conducted six months after the completion of the pilot project. One interaction between the congregation and the Hispanic neighbors had occurred during the project, namely the flower-arranging class. Other interactions, however, occurred after that time, with increasing warmth and acceptance observed on the part of both groups. The thoughts expressed by the interviewees, therefore, were not based simply upon the pilot program itself, but upon its longer-term effects.

The first two questions established who the responders were and how they were associated with the church. These served the purpose of engaging them in, and setting the tone for the discussion. The next question asked them to give their impression of the church's response to the program. This question was general in nature, not directed toward the interaction between the church and the Hispanic community. Both, however, answered it in terms of not only that relationship, but how they were both affected by it,

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.



as well. It was obvious to the author that there was a high level of predisposition on their part to see the program through this lens. She did not interfere with this in any way, however, as this suited the purpose of her questioning.

In her response to this question, the Hispanic minister mentioned the church's commitment to serving the Hispanic population as expressed through their offering her a paid position, and allocating specific church funding for this ministry. Her husband added that he had received numerous comments from members of the congregation, assuring him that they wholeheartedly supported this program. He mentioned, further, that people had tears in their eyes when they discussed this.

Due to the very personal nature of these answers, therefore, the author realized that the result of the project was just as important to the interviewees as it was to the Hispanic neighbors, and, in fact, to her. It was her impression that the interviewees were extremely pleased and moved by this.

The next question was designed to ascertain, through the eyes of the interviewees, the targeted neighborhood's response as a result of the project. While their views would be subjective, it was the most expedient way to collect this information.

The Hispanic minister said that the Latinas and their children feel much more welcomed as a result of the church's reaction to *CYN* and its new attitude toward reaching out to them. She elaborated on the way the Latinas had witnessed and expressed their tearful thanks to the congregation during a joint service held in June. She added that this group no longer considers itself to be simply an ESL class, but, instead, has become a ministry group. She finished by saying that they trust the church to hold their weekly offerings in the church's bank account.

Her husband added that he thinks that the Latino community feels that the church is honestly trying to reach out to them. Even more importantly, he felt that the Latinas feel that their social and spiritual needs are being attended to by the church.

These answers confirmed the author's observations and impression of how the results of the project had impacted the Latinas who are part of the Saturday afternoon program. In fact, this was the exact result she had wanted to achieve through this project.

The next question was slightly more general, in that it asked the responders to discuss what overall achievements they credited to the program. The Hispanic minister mentioned that, as a result of the stronger relationship between the established congregation and the Saturday group, the Hispanic women have expressed interest in learning more about the UCC and the Bible. Although they are all Roman Catholic, they are now open to considering membership in the UCC.

Her husband felt that the program had specifically caused the church to become more intentional in its ministry to the Latinas, and that it was now a real support system to them. This was evident through their financial commitment, as well as their efforts to integrate themselves into the Saturday afternoon program, and the people into the life of their own worship and programs. These answers, too, were exactly what the author observed happening, and confirmed her findings.

The next question was meant to reveal what obstacles the two thought might impact the program. Their answers were very personal and general in nature. They both discussed anti-immigrant sentiments in the United States, which they feel sets the tone for churches to avoid outreach. The second responder also mentioned that the Christian

challenge is to go reach out to those outside the comfort zone of the congregation, specifically to the immigrants, or anyone else in the neighborhood.

Their answers to the next question revealed these sentiments, as well. When asked what further steps needed to be addressed by the program, the Hispanic minister said that she thought that the church needs to know its neighbors on a more personal level in order to understand their reality and their culture. Her husband referred again to the Christian imperative to practice the gospel mission.

When the author asked how the program could make this happen, the Hispanic minister said the next step would be for the church to sponsor forums or lectures on the Latina reality. The author realized that this answer did offer a next step, but that it was of a very personal nature, and revealed the deep sentiments and interest of this minister.

Similar to the one asked of the focus group, the next question was designed to allow the interviewees to provide an overall opinion as to how the program might work in the statewide model. The Hispanic minister felt that once a congregation assessed its community to determine a target population, this program would help it to reach out to that population in a structured way. Her husband said that it would challenge conventional attitudes, allowing the church to consider new ways to do Christian mission and understand the gospel. Their answers were in line with the author's opinion.

The interview ended by asking if either interviewee had anything else to say about the program. The Hispanic minister pointed out that the change it brings about is not easy, as it causes people to feel threatened. She added that the Christian directive to welcome the stranger was not easy, either. Her husband stated that he felt this program

was necessary and vital to church mission and fulfillment of the gospel mission. These answers reflected the purpose with which the author designed the program.

### Results Revealed by the Relevant Documents

The documents relevant to this project included the Action Plan Forms used by each Ministry Action Team to track its work. While similar in format, there are five different forms, each highlighting the area of ministry a particular team addresses—Mission, Fellowship, Worship, Generosity, or Invitation—and includes specific wording to that effect.

The purpose of these documents in the ongoing model is to provide structure to work that will be done by each team. The fields common to all five forms, and which should be filled out identically, are those which list the target groups. There are three spaces for this information, which should be agreed upon by all five teams, and, in fact, the entire church.

Once this has been determined, the teams brainstorm independently and decide what steps they will take. The forms provide the framework for recording these changes, as well as resources needed, who needs to be consulted, how the congregation will be involved, how much each change will cost, and how long it will take. Again, there is room on the form for three such steps.

For the purpose of this pilot project, the Action Teams were asked to complete the form during the third and final workshop. Many of their planned changes had already been put into place, or were about to take place. This meant that they had plenty of information available to complete the form. For the most part, they found the forms self-

explanatory. Their questions on how to fill out parts of the form were merely meant to check if they were correct in their assumptions in how to do so. All were.

The author noted that the disadvantage to this timing was that the teams had not benefited from the use of the forms, as designed. They had gone ahead with their work without this structure, not worrying about resources needed or going through proper channels in the church. While this had no negative impact in the setting of the pilot project, the author feels strongly that this might have consequences in other settings. In the case of the pilot project, the entire congregation was prepared to expect changes, and open to them, understanding that this was only a trial, of sorts.

The other disadvantage to the timing was that the teams had made more changes than the form could accommodate in some cases. When used as designed, this would not be the case. The space for only three changes is important, as it does not allow a team to make too many changes at once.

Perhaps it is relevant to this study to note that, when this form was introduced during the third phase of the statewide kick-off in June, other considerations were raised as to its timing in the overall model. In this setting, participants from other churches felt that the form was one of the most significant aspects of the program. It gave them a clearer understanding of what the program was about, and the end goals.

The use of, and reaction to these forms on the part of those involved in the local pilot program, and others who participated in the later statewide model based upon the pilot program, have caused the author and her Regional Conference Minister to rethink when and how they should be introduced to the participants. They have, therefore, decided to do so during the first phase, explaining that they will be used to plan and

implement the steps that will be taken. It will also be explained that these forms will serve to track actions taken by each team for purposes of reference. Finally, the participants will be advised that these forms should be used in the ongoing process of evaluating changes already made, and planning the next changes.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **REFLECTIONS, SUMMARY, AND CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of this pilot project was, once again, two-fold. The first goal was to affect change in the relationship between the author's congregation and the Spanish-speaking population in the church's neighborhood. While the church was somewhat involved in allowing this ministry to happen on Saturday afternoons, the church members were not personally involved in that program.

The second goal was that the local church would assist the author and her Regional Conference Minister in fine-tuning the project for use in the statewide UCC arena. This involved feedback on the congregation's part as to their understanding of the goals, materials, and results of the pilot project. This, in turn, would allow any necessary modifications or enhancements to be made to the project before it was used in other settings.

There were significant results in both stated purposes of the pilot project. At the local level, much success was realized in changing the relationship between the church and its Spanish-speaking neighbors. Also, in terms of the future use of the project at the state level, the pilot project did provide the author with beneficial, and perhaps necessary, changes to the program for use with a wider audience.

Among the successful results realized in the local setting, the list includes openness to change, a new acceptance of different cultural and language groups; and commitment, in terms of finances, time, and effort, toward integrating Spanish-speaking

neighbors into the life of the church. These were the specific goals the author had in mind when designing the program.

There were many other important results, however, which the author had not expected, nor planned for. For example, there were two new groups formed within the life of the church; the youth were provided an opportunity to implement their own style of worship, which included guitar, drums, and powerpoint presentations; advertising of the church's mission and programming was done via newspaper, cable TV, and door-to-door contacts; a new church brochure was designed; homebound members and members in nursing homes were being visited and/or transported to church by other church members; the church kitchen renovation was finally started; and a salary was budgeted for the hiring of a Hispanic minister to assist the author.

Perhaps the most important change on the local level, however, was the new vitality the pilot project brought to the local church, and to its author. It literally transformed the church from one that was holding its own, to one that was alive with energy and enthusiasm. This was evident in the giving of time and finances, as mentioned earlier, but also obvious in the increased attendance at worship services, group meetings, and various events during this time period and the months that have passed since the completion of the project.

The author, too, has been positively affected by the program. She no longer feels alone in her vision, nor frustrated in trying to make it a reality. The congregation has joined her in her efforts to integrate the Spanish-speaking neighbors into the life of the church.



In terms of the other purpose of the project, to fine-tune the model for use in other settings within the state, there were significant results, as well. Based upon feedback from the local church, the author and her Regional Conference Minister made changes to the powerpoint presentation, the workshop scripts, and the methods of introducing these to a local congregation. In addition, they recognized the need for the documents to be available in both print and via computer. They created a *Casting Your Nets* manual, therefore, and worked with a consultant to create a website ([www.castingournets.org](http://www.castingournets.org)).

One specific item of concern raised by the pilot project should be noted. As mentioned earlier in this document, it surfaced during the first *Casting Your Nets Sunday* exercise involving the mapping of the church's service area. During that task, one particular member did not agree with the boundaries of the service area, as they excluded the part of the city in which she lived. She changed her stance on this within a week, concurring with the rest of the congregation, which had defined a three-mile radius around the church. The author, at that time, had decided that this member's sentiment would warrant close and ongoing attention, as her facial expression and level of involvement in the project did not agree with her change of mind.

This concern, in fact, justified as it surfaced again six months after the conclusion of the pilot project. This same member, as Chair of the Fund Raising Committee, and because of personal commitments, had been too busy to be part of any of the five Action Teams. It seems, however, that she had transferred her earlier feeling of being *excluded*, or *out-of-the-loop*, so to speak, to her attitude toward the program itself, throughout its implementation. This became obvious to the author when this woman mentioned, at a Trustee meeting, that she thought the program had interfered with her committee's ability

to do its job. She blamed this on the shift in attention and focus, which she felt had caused members of her committee to be unavailable to attend her meetings. The author attempted to stay neutral during this conversation. A member of her committee, also a co-leader of one of the Action Teams, was present, however, and spoke up, advising that she had not missed a single meeting. She said this gently, and added that the lack of fundraising had been due to the kitchen renovation, which had resulted in the postponement of several annual money-making activities. The disgruntled member stated that she was happy to say that she was wrong. Her facial expression again belied her voiced sentiment.

The author, in hindsight, realized that the rejection perceived by this one member of her church might occur in other implementation settings, as well. The service area boundaries decided upon by any congregation most likely would put certain members outside the borders. This could result in those members considering themselves to be *excluded*, even if only *on paper*, so to speak, and could cause feelings of hurt, anger, or rejection.

In this particular case, the author pursued this further by having a follow-up conversation with the person in question. She encouraged her to join the Generosity Team, and to attend the next statewide retreat in October, advising that an expert in the field of fundraising would be working with the Generosity Team Leaders from across the state. The member asked for more clarification about the definition of *generosity* as it pertains to the program, and said that she would consider participating in both the team and the retreat. In a later conversation, the author learned that this woman had lived in the

church's immediate neighborhood many years ago, and had not agreed wholeheartedly with her husband's decision to do so. In fact, she was still unhappy about that move.

As a result of this conversation, the author came to two conclusions. First, extreme caution must be taken so as not to exclude anyone in the church during the implementation of the project. The pastor must be the one to monitor this, but should be very open about the fact that he or she is doing so.

Second, the author's earlier misgivings about the participants' understanding of the terms *generosity* and *mission* were well-founded. These terms must be clearly defined at the very beginning of project implementation.

### Comparison of the Results to Similar Models

When compared to other models of church growth, renewal, or transformation, this project exhibits various similarities, but one significant difference. Like other models, it provides a framework in which a church might implement changes to the way it operates within its community. As noted earlier in this document, there are numerous such programs available through the purchase of books, packages, or materials, or on the internet. The author has used some of these materials in her program design, including mapping exercises designed by Carl S. Dudley and Luther K. Snow, for example.

Unfortunately, these programs must be sought out by a church, and must then be implemented without support. Sometimes this is initiated by the pastor, who is attempting to convince the congregation to join in. At other times, although leaders in the congregation may be active participants in the process, the church is left on its own to put the program into effect.

As mentioned earlier, the author's own denomination, the UCC, has also recently created a new, computerized evangelism product for use by its congregations. This was in the process of being created coincidentally with the design of this project by the author and her Regional Conference Minister. It is called *Ready, Set, Grow!* and may be accessed through the UCC national website.<sup>1</sup> The materials used, and the areas of ministry addressed by this program are very similar to that of this pilot project design. This denominational program, however, like the ones mentioned above, must be sought out by the local church, and implemented without the ongoing support, sharing, and expert advice available in the *Casting Your Nets* project design.

The beneficial difference in *Casting Your Nets* is that it does not simply give answers or how-to directions on how to realize congregational transformation that results in growth in mission, money, or membership. It is, instead, an empowerment model that provides the framework for churches to reconsider their current situation and come up with their own questions and answers. In addition, it provides hand-holding support and encouragement during the process, as well as expert training in each of the five stated areas of ministry. Built into the statewide model, also, is a support system for pastors, and Yahoo groups for each of the six teams—Mission, Fellowship, Worship, Generosity, Invitation, and Pastors.

It is the author's belief that the difference of utmost significance in this model is its relational design. This is inherent in any such program which allows or encourages members of the congregation to take part in the decision-making process and implementation of changes projected by those members. *Casting Your Nets*, however,

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<sup>1</sup>United Church of Christ—Congregational Vitality, "Ready, Set, Grow Introduction," available from <http://www.uccvitality.org/resource/ready-set-grow-introduction.html> (accessed August 18, 2007).

goes one step further. It maintains relationship and conversation between pastors and members within, and between the local church's Action Teams; between pastors and members of Action Teams across the state; and between pastors, Action Teams, and the author and her Regional Conference Minister. In addition, the future use of this project includes three statewide retreats per year, which will afford all participants access to sharing their ideas, receiving help with any ongoing questions or concerns, and ongoing training by experts in their particular areas of ministry.

Future consideration should be given to tracking the success of this project as it is used in the larger UCC arena. To date, 153 churches have been invited to participate in the next statewide event on October 20 – 21, 2007. This larger use of this project has produced the need for revisions resulting in a slightly different presentation format.

In this wide-ranging model, each Regional Conference Minister in the New York Conference was asked to identify churches in his or her area that were considered *healthy*, or in other words, relatively conflict- or problem-free. These churches were then invited to participate in *Casting Your Nets*. Along with the invitation, each received a DVD which included a revised powerpoint presentation and overview resources to be printed and used in the local church. In addition, the names, telephone numbers, and e-mail addresses were provided for three people trained by the author and her RCM to answer questions about the program and the upcoming event.

Each church that is interested in participating is asked to schedule the three *Casting Your Nets Sundays* in its local setting. Optimally, participating churches would have at least shown the DVD prior to attending. At the very least, it must have chosen an Action Team. The pastor and the Action Team then attend the first weekend session,

along with the pastors and teams from those churches that have already participated in the pilot program. These new churches will spend a part of the weekend in a workshop with the author and her RCM. At this time, they will be given an overview of all three *CYN Sundays*, and practice role-playing some of the activities. Upon returning home, they will then be equipped to implement the *CYN Sundays* in their own setting. During this time, the returning Action Teams will be grouped together by ministry area in order that they might share what has happened in their churches.

The other part of each weekend will be devoted to spending time with experts in each area of ministry. These facilitators have been secured for all three upcoming sessions. The Mission School Facilitator will be Carl Dudley, Professor of Church and Community at Hartford Seminary, and Co-Director of the Seminary's Hartford Institute for Religion Research. The Fellowship School Facilitator is Laurie Hafner, Senior Pastor of Coral Gables Congregational Church. The Worship School Facilitator is Maren Tirabassi, who creates liturgical resources for Pilgrim and Augsburg/Fortress Press. The Generosity School Facilitator is Riess Potterveld, President of Lancaster Theological Seminary. Finally, the Invitation School Facilitator is Ron Buford, the architect of the StillSpeaking Initiative. In addition, the Auburn Coaching Institute, part of Auburn Theological Seminary in New York, has been contracted to provide coaches to work in small groups with the pastors who attend.

During the two months leading up to this October retreat, the author and her Regional Conference Minister have been traveling throughout the state of New York to conduct regional introductory sessions. Excitement and interest have been expressed on the part of those who have attended, and most plan to register for the event. The author's

Action Team leaders and co-leaders, as well as the Hispanic minister and her husband plan to attend. All are eager to see what new ideas and further transformation the continuation of this project will bring to the Chatterton Hill Church. The author is even more excited, and is waiting to see how far-reaching the effects of the program will be. Perhaps it will indeed be a *tipping point*<sup>2</sup> for both her church and her denomination's State Conference, bringing about a major change in the way congregations understand themselves and their mission. This is certainly food for further research and documentation.

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<sup>2</sup>Gladwell, *The Tipping Point*, 172-173.

**APPENDIX A**  
***CASTING YOUR NETS* MINISTRY AREAS**



### *Casting Your Nets ~ Ministry Areas*

***These are the Ministry Areas that are the foci of the conference-wide Fishing Schools and of each congregation's Action Plan. Please choose the area that most interests you! We need YOU on the team!***

***Focusing on Mission: reorienting churches to organize themselves around mission. The Mission School aims for congregations to see themselves as 'gathered to be sent' and 'answering God's call to do something for others.' These are both the means and end of their existence. Despite our day's hunger for personal spiritual experience, church must enable individuals to participate/invest in something greater than themselves. Serving intramural and extramural needs will be prescribed as making the church's mission whole.***

***Growing Fellowship: deepening relationships, building trust/cooperation, sharing our lives, maintaining confidentiality, mediating conflict mediation, creating consensus, streamlining and adapting governance, instituting gift assessments, designing ministries that work for today's volunteers. The Fellowship School aims to strengthen relationships, internal support and process so our congregations' fellowship is worthy of being called 'Christian' and worthwhile to people whose lives are already too full and busy.***

***Strengthening Worship: evolving congregations' practices of worship such that excellent services are more accessible and meaningful to a larger 'audience.' The Worship School aims to resource leaders for coaxing congregations towards updating liturgical traditions, developing deeper worship experiences, creating new practices customized for wider communities and opening more people to an experience of the holy (closeness to God and neighbor), not just for our minds, but also for our hearts/bodies.***

***Teaching Generosity: prompting people to dedicate their whole lives as generous stewards. The Generosity School aims to teach that 'giving of ourselves' (including specific dedication of material resources!) is crucial for faithfulness. Our congregations need to grow towards generosity in all things as a sign of our thanksgiving—but specifically, generously financing reinvigorated mission. Rather than asking for more money because 'we don't have enough,' the Action Plan process includes expense projections for each step towards***

*additional mission and members, such that community members are contributing more for mission work they are committed to and proud of.*

*Inviting Others: intramurally, experiencing and talking with one another about the blessings of God working in our lives and of participating in the life of the church and extramurally, sharing those blessings appropriately beyond our four walls. The Invitation School aims to teach individuals and congregations to speak in a natural, confident UCC way about their faith and how it impacts their lives. In some cases, this intramural piece is about prompting congregations to become better spiritual greenhouses. The second step for the Invitation School is outward-- helping our churches share the promise effectively in their broader communities. Our congregations must find appropriate ways to show/broadcast United Church of Christ faith as an invitation/promise to those whose lives might be enriched by participating, but do not know what the church can offer.*

**APPENDIX B**  
**SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER ARTICLE**

### *CASTING OUR NETS HERE AT CHATTERTON HILL CHURCH*

"Jesus called out to the Disciples in the boat, 'Friends, haven't you any fish?' 'No,' they answered. Jesus responded, 'Throw your net on the [left] side of the boat, and you will find some.' When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the huge number of fish." John 21:5-6

Our congregation has been invited to play a crucial part in a brand-new initiative in our New York Conference. Rev. Bonnie, as part of her doctoral work, has teamed up with our Regional Conference Minister, Rev. Michael Caine, to get this new project going. "Casting Your Nets" might be considered the "next step", following in the path of "God Is Still Speaking." GISS got us all motivated and ready to receive new members when they heard about who we are. CYN will go a little further. It will provide support and training to our congregations, with action-oriented methods of reaching out to the unchurched in our communities, and growing in terms of mission, members, and money. Our church has the opportunity to be the pilot church for this project. We will be able to test the model and provide feedback on it so that it can be fine-tuned before the first statewide trial in January. This is an exciting prospect, for it offers us a chance to be more well-known, both in our own community and in the larger church. And, who knows, we might even grow in innumerable ways in the process! This project will require hard-work, commitment, and a willingness to try new things. Rev. Bonnie and Rev. Caine have planned the three special worship services/training sessions for October 15, November 19, and January 7. You will hear more about the format for these in next month's Chatterings. Between these sessions, action teams will be formed to complete particular tasks, including analyzing our community and making very small changes, or "baby steps" in reaching out in new ways. We hope that you will volunteer to be part of this initiative. Jesus has challenged us, after all, to be "fishers" of people. *Stay tuned, because...*

***God is still speaking, and, through Jesus, calling us to "Cast Our Nets!"***

## **Chatterings**

*The Chatterton Hill Church  
85 Chatterton Avenue White Plains, New York 10606*

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White Plains, NY  
Permit No. 137

**APPENDIX C**  
**OCTOBER NEWSLETTER ARTICLE**

**CASTING OUR NETS HERE AT CHATTERTON HILL CHURCH**

"Jesus called out to the Disciples in the boat, 'Friends, haven't you any fish?' 'No,' they answered. Jesus responded, 'Throw your net on the [left] side of the boat, and you will find some.' When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the huge number of fish." John 21:5-6

Everyone is urged to attend and participate in our first *Casting Your Nets* worship, lunch, and pilot project on Sunday, October 15. We will begin with a motivational powerpoint Bible Study and Worship Service, led by Rev. Michael Caine, our Regional Conference Minister, and Rev. Bonnie. Following the service, we will move down to the Fellowship Hall for a light lunch, and begin work on our project. We plan to be done with our work in a timely manner. The first session will involve mapping ~ looking at our community and determining what our ministry boundaries and opportunities are. We will also create a rough timeline of our history as a church and the milestones we have experienced along the way. Both of these will help us determine where we will go next as a faith community. We need YOUR input to set our goals for the future. Chatterton Hill Church will survive and thrive only if those who are part of its congregation commit themselves to make it happen. Come and cast the nets with us!

I look forward to meeting you! - John Dory

**God is still speaking, and, through Jesus, calling us to "Cast Our Nets!"**

**Chatterings**

*The Chatterton Hill Church*  
85 Chatterton Avenue White Plains, New York 10606

Non-ProfitOrg.  
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White Plains, NY  
Permit No. 13

## **APPENDIX D**

### **FIRST PREPARATORY SERMON PRIOR TO PROJECT**

Sermon Title: *More than Enough*  
Scripture: John 6:1-15  
Date: August 27, 2006

There is an interesting phenomenon that goes on here at Chatterton Hill Church when it comes to food. There is always more than enough, isn't there? Even when we seem to have more people than usual, there is always more than enough to feed them all. There have been times when it did not seem possible. For example, when [JK} died, we did not expect the multitude that arrived for his service and repast. There were triple the number of people we had ordered food for from the caterer. We, who were serving, began to panic. We thought we would have to send somebody down to the store for more food. We didn't have to do that. Somehow, there was so much left over that we had to send food to the Open Arms Men's Shelter.

There is a similar dilemma in today's Gospel lesson, with a similar outcome. There is a large crowd following Jesus and the disciples—more than 5,000 men, along with even more women and children. It's getting to be suppertime, and Jesus wants to give them a meal, so he turns to Phillip, who was from that neighborhood, and asks him where to get food for all these people. Phillip responds that it would take almost a year's pay to feed this many.

Phillip, you see, assumes that he needs a whole lot of money to feed a whole bunch of people. He thinks he will have to give Jesus a big amount to get things done the way Jesus wants them to be done.

Another disciple, however, by the name of Andrew, must have overheard the conversation. He has gone out in the crowd, looking to see if some people might have brought something to share. All he finds is one little boy, with two measly little fish, and five loaves of bread.

Andrew comes back and tells Jesus about it. I suppose we should give him some credit for being brave enough to do that, but he doesn't seem very confident about his offer, does he? "How far will this go?" he says. Andrew, like Phillip, seems to assume that Jesus needs something bigger to get things done the way he wants them done.



But Jesus takes them. And, just like he does at the Last Supper, he takes the food and offers thanks for it. Then he begins to pass it out to people himself, giving them as much as they need or want. And we know the end of the story. When Jesus got done, there was still plenty to go around.

It turns out that Jesus did not need a year's wages to accomplish what he wanted. In fact, he didn't need anything big at all. Jesus used something small, something given without much faith, but offered anyway.

And what seemed small and insignificant was more than enough. This is an important message for us, who often think of ourselves that way.

Today, I want us to think a little bit more about Andrew. How much do we even know about this disciple? He is often viewed as a small player in the Gospels, and people tend to forget the small players. He is never the star, always playing second fiddle to his more famous brother, Simon Peter. Even here, in this story, he might be overlooked. Yet, with courage, he speaks up, suggesting the long-shot possibility that this small amount of food might help. We should not discount his courage to speak up. He might not look like a super-hero, and is not recognized as such in the Gospels. Yet, what would have happened if he didn't? Would the miracle have occurred? Perhaps we church people are more like Andrew than we might recognize.

We often think of this story in terms of food. Especially here at Chatterton Hill Church, where we like to eat, the obvious message of this story is that of the miracle of food being multiplied. And, as I have already mentioned, we have known that to happen here, too. But the real message here is about another kind of feeding, feeding of the hungry souls and spirits of the masses. If we in the church, this church or any other small church, think of ourselves with doubt in terms of making ends meet, that's one thing. At times, we do think we don't have enough money, or people energy, to get things done the way we think they should be done. We do want to renovate the kitchen, and there isn't enough money for that. We do want to put in a floor downstairs, and there isn't enough money for that.

But Jesus wasn't concerned with that. He was concerned with feeding, yes, but again we might mistake his intention. Jesus did not come here to solve hunger of the body. If he did, that's all we would hear about him in the Gospels. Instead, he came to

feed people's hearts, minds, and souls, to bring them into relationship with God through his teaching, his example, his sacrifice, his life. In this story, he does not perform the feeding miracle by himself. Two small players are involved. One, Andrew, who speaks up with what might seem like a crazy suggestion, and another, a small boy, who offers the little bit that he has. Now what does this suggest to us, as a church? . . . or to us, as individuals, within the church?

I think the time has come for us to get serious about how small we are as a church. We are as small as that little boy in the story, someone almost nobody notices, and someone who doesn't have very much. That's us, folks.

We have oftentimes talked about how much we don't have, wondering how we continue to make ends meet. But, as in this story, if that is our main concern, we have missed the message of the Gospel. Jesus would not share our concerns. He would, however, ask of us, his disciples in this day and age, the same question he posed to his disciples then: Where can *we* get enough food to feed all these people? What can we offer to the crowd out there? And believe me, there is a crowd out there, whether we recognize it or not. What do we have that will feed them?

We are like Andrew and this small boy in today's story. We do have small bits to offer, and we do have what might seem like preposterous ideas that we toss around. Yet we sit here holding back. Pay attention very carefully to this. If Andrew had not spoken up, if the boy had not offered what little he had there would NOT have been enough. But the miracle is that there was more than enough.

So what can we do? It is time for us to become like Andrew, to become that little boy. We need a miracle. We need Jesus to multiply, to magnify what we have to offer, however small that might be, so that it will become more than enough. If we can fill a table with food, we should be able to fill a church. If we believe it, if we dare it, if we speak it, if we offer it, it will happen. It takes changing our focus from one of holding back, to one of offering the little bit that we have. It also takes a new understanding of our participation in the miracle-making partnership with Jesus. And it takes courage. Feeding souls must become our priority and focus, and we must be willing to humbly offer what little we think we have to do so. We must offer our ideas, no matter how small and ordinary they might seem, or how insignificant we think they are.

Do we have what it takes, this small church, this small group of God's gathered people, to help Jesus perform miracles? Let me ask you that again (repeat).

You bet we do! With focus, with courage, with faith in Jesus to help us use small things to great things, we do have more than enough! Amen!

**APPENDIX E**

**SECOND PREPARATORY SERMON PRIOR TO PROJECT**

Sermon Title: *Fall Housecleaning*  
Scripture: Mark 7:1-8, 14-15  
Date: September 3, 2006

Labor Day has come early this year, bringing with it cooler temperatures today. This only reminds us that school is back in session this week, and Fall is around the corner, doesn't it?

When I was growing up, there used to be something called "spring" or "fall housecleaning". That meant taking down the curtains to wash and iron them, cleaning out closets and drawers, moving furniture to clean under it . . . you know, a really thorough cleaning to get ready for the upcoming season. Now that women work outside the home, I'm not sure many of them still clean this way anymore. I think they try to spread out the big tasks throughout the year. But old traditions die hard, so I still find myself *having* to perform this annual ritual . . . I have to get it all done by Labor Day weekend to feel right. Maybe you do, too, because, after all, the slower days of summer afford us the time to get all our projects done . . . We clean up the dust and cob webs of the past, so that we can focus on the new present, and future. After all, there is a saying that goes, "Cleanliness is next to Godliness."

Cleanliness, in fact, is at the heart of today's scripture from Mark, chapter 7. We hear Jesus address this very concept—the idea of "cleaning up", but from a different aspect. He talks about "cleanliness of the heart." He tries to define the difference between clean and unclean. The discussion comes up when he is confronted by the scribes and Pharisees about his disciples don't wash their hands properly before they eat.

You see, because the religious leaders of Israel took God's laws with utmost seriousness, they had developed an extensive interpretation of that law to be applied to daily life, following very, very strong traditions. One such tradition had to do with cleanliness.

To assure ritual cleanliness, the faithful were to wash their hands all the way up to their elbows and then raise their arms to let the dirt flow off their elbows, and not back

onto their hands (demonstrate). Utensils were to be washed in a certain way, also, as were foods bought at the market.

Now there were not necessarily bad rules. They were good for one's health, but they were still part of tradition, because they weren't followed for simply reasons of health. Instead, they were to be followed as a sign of how religious one was.

The problem was that Jesus' disciples didn't always follow these traditional teachings. Only a few days earlier, they had participated in the feeding of the multitude with a few fish and loaves of bread, and apparently there had been no ritual cleansing. And so the Pharisees challenge Jesus. "Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands" they ask.

Jesus cuts through their superficial piety with his reply. "Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.' You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition."

Holding on to human tradition, Jesus explains, is no substitute for begin in right relationship with God. Faithfulness to God is not measured by clean hands, but in lives constantly renewed and challenged by God's Holy Spirit.

Now if I were to accuse you of being Pharisees, you would be insulted. In this day and age we have come to understand their name to be synonymous with hypocrisy. But in Jesus' time, Pharisees were not so badly viewed. They were the most religious people in the most religious nation. But, you see, that was the problem. They were more concerned with tradition, with appearing "religious", than they were about God. They were good people in the worst sense of the word. Their goodness was based solely upon tradition, and for this Jesus confronted them. In verse 13, he said, "You make void the word of God through your tradition which you hand on."

Now what this means to you and me, I believe, is this . . . As humans we are a bit overwhelmed by our encounter with God. We know it to be full of reverence. But, also, as humans, we are naturally inclined to traditions and maintaining the status quo. How often have you heard it said, "That's the way we've always done it."? The fact is, some traditions have current meaning, and some do not, despite the fact that all traditions had meaning when they began. Let me tell you a little story to illustrate my point.

Once there was a young wife who always cut off the end of the ham before she put it in the pan to bake in the oven. When her husband noticed this one day, he asked her why she did that. She said that her mother had taught her to do it that way. The next time he saw his mother-in-law, he asked her why. She said that her own mother had taught her to do it that way. When he and his wife went to visit her grandmother in the nursing home a few weeks later, he remembered to ask her about this ham business. She said, “Oh, that! Well, I loved this one particular baking pan, and always used it. Problem was, it was never really long enough for a baked ham, so I always cut off the end to make it fit!”

In terms of our lives as Christians, we need to examine our traditions in light of our attention to God. For example, the tradition of saying the Lord’s Prayer—do we mean the words when we say them? Or the way we receive communion—what does it mean to us as we take it; what are we feeling in our hearts as we feed the bread in our hands; are we truly in touch with the body of Christ? And as we take the cup, do we drink to be renewed and refreshed, or are we simply going through the ceremony?

The word of God to which Jesus calls our attention is essential to Christian life. The word of God is to be in our hearts, not only on our lips, or in our building, or displayed on our communion table. For when we occupy too much time and energy on tradition, we neglect the important business of making sure our worship is based upon a meaningful, relevant relationship with God.

Jesus reminds us through today’s scripture that maybe it is time to stop cutting off the end of the ham just because that’s the way we’ve been taught to bake a ham. Just maybe, instead, it’s time to do some fall housecleaning, right here at Chatterton Hill church.

What does it mean to be church? Is it about how we look (point around sanctuary, mention renovation, exterior, etc.)? It is our traditions (discuss hymns, discomfort with new hymns)? How do newcomers, new disciples view what we do? Does it feel just as ritualistic to them as the traditions of the Pharisees and Scribes felt to Jesus and his followers?

The key here, according to Jesus, is not how clean and orderly our house is (either at home or at church, but thank you, [sexton] for keeping it so!), but the spirit with which

we relate to God. The sincere heart with which we relate to God is what we should be offering to others.

Fall is here, time for housecleaning. What cobwebs should we attack first? What is it that we can clean up, dust off, so that others can have easy access to relationship with God right here? Jesus challenges us to do some Fall housecleaning. Let us open our hearts and minds to the challenge! Amen.



## **APPENDIX F**

### **THIRD PREPARATORY SERMON PRIOR TO PROJECT**

Sermon Title: *Worldwide Communion*  
Scripture: James 2:3-18  
Date: October 1, 2006

This morning, while we were still sleeping, Christians in the Congo left their homes for places of worship to see their pastors take bread in their hands and say, “This is my body.” In the Church of the Holy Resurrection in Jerusalem, the same words were spoken, “This is my body.” Much earlier, in Australia, the same words were uttered with reverence. In churches and cathedrals all across the United States today, pastors will take bread into their hands and repeat the same words, “This is my body.” And this afternoon, in places of worship in the Pacific islands, these words will be spoken, as well.

How do we know? Because today is Worldwide Communion Sunday. Throughout the world, churches of every denomination, in every country, in many different languages are celebrating the Lord’s Supper. It is an important yearly celebration. We need this common celebration, for it reminds us that our one foundation, our unifying presence, is none other than Jesus Christ, who gave his life for *all* people. We need to be reminded that he did this not just for this church, or this denomination, but for all communities gathered in his name, in all churches, in all denominations. We need to be reminded that he did this not just for you and me, but for the neighbors next door, and across the street, and around the world. It reminds us that “God so loved the world,” as the Gospel of John taught us, and God still loves the world. Yes, we need Worldwide Communion Sunday to remind us that, in Christ, we are one with all Christians in every time and place.

Some of us might think we know this, that we need no reminder. Perhaps those are the very same people who felt that it was too much trouble to keep up our citywide Worldwide Communion Sunday Service each year. It went wonderfully for about five years, gathering in various churches around the city, following the communion tradition of each particular church. That was, until the negative comments began . . . words like, “It just didn’t seem like communion to me—we don’t do it that way in our church.” Or, “People were all doing something different, and nobody knew what to do.” Or, “Those people just don’t believe the same thing I do about the meaning of communion.”

These comments seem, to me, to go against what God intends for us in the sacrament of communion . . . or, as I like to call it, common union. They’re inferring that

there is no such union, and that in fact, communion divides us as Christians. This is not what communion is about. Let me give you a few examples of divisive communion.

My uncle was an Episcopalian. When he passed away, about 25 years ago, I went to his funeral, of course. The service included the Lord's Supper, with kneeling at the altar to receive the elements. Which was fine with me, but I embarrassed my family by going up to that altar to take communion. They knew that I was a member of the UCC, after all, and that meant that I was not really invited to participate. My aunt felt badly about my not being included, so as I followed her, she whispered that I should not say anything. Just take it, which I did. But how do you think that made me feel? I felt like I was cheating, being sneaky, which later seemed ludicrous when I thought about it.

A few months later, when my brother married a Catholic, I was confronted with the same situation. This time I went up to take communion, but with a different attitude, one of rebellion. How dare someone say that I was not welcome to receive!

Gratefully, some churches and some denominations have worked hard to bread down such barriers. We here in the UCC proclaim that we have an open table, no questions asked. At least we say that's what we believe. But that isn't always the case, not even in our own UCC churches. The real meaning of Worldwide Communion Sunday hasn't really taken hold, despite how long it's been around. It was started back in 1935 in the hope that worldwide communion would overcome worldwide conflict, and would lead the way in ending the violence that existed between nations . . . that it would symbolize the unity of all people. That has not really happened. Anyway, the theory was that, if Christians couldn't bring themselves to really understand their common union, at least they could take communion together on the same day, even if it was in different places and in different ways.

Unfortunately, over time, the communion table, rather than uniting Christians, has served as the exact point of excluding others. Even though it has gotten better in recent years, Christians still have a long way to go in understanding that, in Christ, we are all one.

The conflict between Christians has a long history, but perhaps there is an even more divisive history between the three great religious traditions. Christians and Jews are attempting to be more tolerant of each other, but the history between the two has been

dreadful over the past 2,000 years. So, too, has the history been between Christians and Muslims. Now, on the heels of September 11, it has taken on a new dimension. The conflict between Jews and Muslims, Palestinians and Israelis continues voraciously in the Middle East, and around the world. Worldwide Communion Sunday does not address the larger religious divisions that exist in the world today. Christians, Jews, and Muslims are still having great trouble understanding each other. I found a little story in a magazine years ago that illustrates what I mean. Unfortunately, I don't remember where I found it, but it goes like this . . .

Several centuries ago, the Pope decreed that all the Jews had to convert or leave Italy. There was a huge outcry from the Jewish community, so the Pope offered a deal. He would have a religious debate with the leader of the Jewish community. If the Jewish leader, won, they could stay in Italy; if the Pops won, they would have to leave.

The Jewish people met and picked an aged but wise leader, Rabbi Moishe, to represent them in the debate. As Moishe spoke no Italian, however, and the Pope spoke no Yiddish, they all agreed that it would be a silent debate.

On the chosen day, the Pope and Rabbi Moishe sat opposite each other for a full minute before the Pope raised his hand and showed three fingers. Rabbi Moishe looked back and raised one finger. Next the Pope waved his finger around his head. Rabbi Moishe pointed to the ground where he sat. The Pope then brought out a communion wafer and a chalice of wine. Rabbi Moishe pulled out an apple. With that, the Pope declared that he was beaten, that Rabbi Moishe was too clever and that the Jews could stay.

Later, the Cardinals met with the Pope, asking what had happened. The Pope said, "First, I held up three fingers to represent the Trinity. He responded by holding up one finger to remind me that there is still only one God common to both our beliefs. Then, I waved my finger to show him that God was all around us. He responded by pointing to the ground to show that God was also right here with us. I pulled out the wine and wager to show that God absolves us of all our sins. He pulled out an apple to remind me of the original sin. He had me beaten and I could not continue."

Meanwhile the Jewish community gathered around Rabbi Moishe. "What happened?" they asked. "Well," said Moishe, "first he said to me that we had three days

to get out of Italy, so I showed him what I thought of that by holding up my finger. Then he tells me that the whole country would be cleared of Jews and I said to him, ‘Mr. Pope, we’re staying right here!’”

“And then what?” asked someone. “Who knows?” said Moishe. “He took out his lunch, so I took out mine.”

This story might give us a little insight to the meaning of Worldwide Communion Sunday. First, the conversation between the Pope and the Rabbi resulted in miscommunication all around. They did not understand what each other meant at all. This is very much like what happens between the major faiths and denominations, and even within denominations, all the time.

Second, most of what they didn’t get in each other’s positions was beside the point. In fact, if they had understood each other, it might have made matters worse! Sometimes it’s just as well that we don’t know what each other mean, because, as we all know, the content of many an argument is not really what the argument is about anyway. As I like to say when it comes to most disagreements, “Who’s going to remember what this was really about a hundred years from now?”

Third, in the end, the Pope and the Rabbi accidentally had lunch together, despite themselves. This is the key to understanding Worldwide Communion Sunday. Understanding each other, and sharing identical styles and rituals is not what it is about. It is about sharing a common, yet divine meal together, which, in turn, leads us to accepting each other’s differences.

As I said earlier, we, in the UCC, proclaim an open table. That means that all are welcome at our table, no matter who they are, or where they are on life’s journey . . . those that are with us already are welcome here, but so, too, are those we have not invited. They are welcome here despite their language, their culture, their race, their nationality; and they are welcome here despite their sexual orientation, or their mental or physical challenges. Why, because together we share common union in Christ Jesus. The communion table is not meant to be exclusive or private. It is a table of welcome.

As we take communion today, let each of us be grateful that we find our own welcome here at the table. And as we partake of the bread and the wine, may we understand ourselves to be doing so with all Christians, those that have gone before, and

those all around the world today. Even more so, let us do so with the expectation of welcoming those we have yet to invite to join us. Amen.

**APPENDIX G**

**WORSHIP BULLETIN FOR *CYN SUNDAY* # 1**

**CASTING YOUR NETS**

at

**The Chatterton Hill Church****White Plains, New York**

October 15, 2006 11:00 a.m.

Ruth Dwyer, Organist &amp; Choir Director

The Rev. Bonnie Miller, Minister

**GATHERING****A Gift of Music to Gather Us****Singing Together** "Enter, Rejoice, and Come In" # 73  
(please stand, if you are able)**Welcome****SENSING GOD'S PRESENCE****Beginning This Day's Conversation with God****A Psalm for Today**Leader: You, God, are our source of help and hope, offering real hope—  
thanksgiving, community, and service.PEOPLE: **Show us, with others and on our own, the difference  
your love makes.**Leader: Your care extends to the ends of the earth; you welcome all—  
The stranger as a neighbor, and the enemy like a friend.PEOPLE: **Help us to be good news to others.**Leader: You have promised to be with us always, especially when we  
walk with Jesus.PEOPLE: **Call us forward in the strength of the Spirit, to serve  
all the world in Jesus' name.**Leader: You send us on journeys, near and far, to share the gifts you  
freely give;PEOPLE: **To discover wonder in Christ;**

Leader: To develop love like Jesus',

PEOPLE: **And to distribute the blessings of belonging and  
believing.**Leader: May this church bring Christ to the world and people to  
Jesus,ALL: **And may we reflect your love and light for all  
creation.****Choir Response "Sweet, Sweet Spirit"**There's a sweet, sweet spirit in this place, and we know that it's the Spirit of the  
Lord. There are sweet expressions on each face, and we know that it's the  
Presence of the Lord. Sweet Holy Spirit, Sweet Heavenly Dove, stay right here



with us, filling us with your love.  
 And for these blessings, we lift our hearts in praise.  
 Without a doubt we'll know that we have been revived, when we shall leave this place.

**Admitting Our Shortcomings** (*praying together in unison*)

**Although you have made us strong, capable church, we still doubt ourselves. We don't grasp what you expect of us. We don't understand that whatever you ask is possible.**

**In the faces of changes all around us—in the world, in the church, in our families—we often feel alone and on our own. We hold on to what we know, rather than opening ourselves to new ways. Resisting, we lose touch with ourselves, our neighbors, and you.**

**Forgive us, God. You have promised us a new day, full of faith and power. Give us a new beginning—overflowing with vision and courage- so that we may share your love in church and throughout the world.**

**Reassurance that God Loves Us**

**LISTENING FOR GOD**

**A Gift from the Choir "Here Am I, Lord" John Ness Beck**

**A Story from the Bible ~ "Jesus and the Fishermen" (John 21:1-14)**

**Our Part in the Story ~ "What if We Accepted Jesus' Help?"**

**SHARING GOD'S GOODNESS**

**Singing Together "You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore"**

New Century Hymnal #173 (*please stand if you are able*)

**Reaching Others**

**Offering our Prayers and Gifts**

**Moving Forward with Power and Purpose**

**Singing Together "Christ for the World We Sing"**

New Century Hymnal #173 (*please stand if you are able*)

**Good Words for Going Forth**

**The Gift of Music to Leave With**

## **APPENDIX H**

### **POWERPOINT PRESENTATION FOR *CYN SUNDAY* # 1**

Slide 1



{THIS PRESENTATION IS MEANT TO BE PARTICIPATIVE AND DELIBERATELY INVOKES A VARIETY OF VOICES: JOHN DORY'S, **THE WORSHIP LEADER'S**, *THE CONGREGATION'S*.

USE THE LEGEND BELOW TO UNDERSTAND THE SPOKEN WORDS THAT ACCOMPANY THE IMAGES PRESENTED:

John Dory's voice-over manuscript is in normal type.

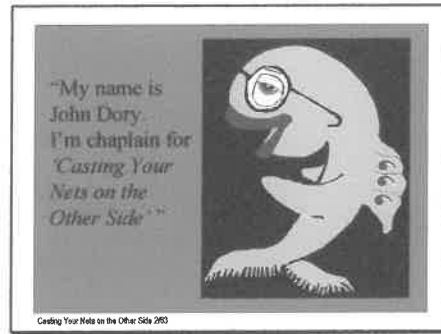
**The bold is what the worship leader needs to say.**

The congregation is invited by either the John Dory voice over or the in-person narrator to read certain screens.

*{Italics provide instructions and other suggestions.}*

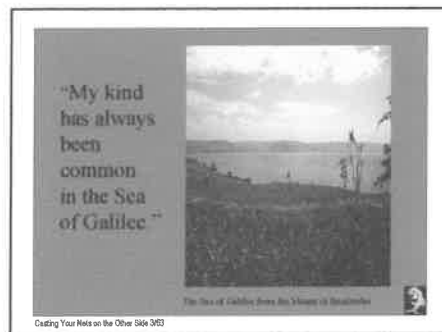
THE CD OF THIS POWERPOINT PRESENTATION WITH THE JOHN DORY'S VOICE-OVER (FOR USE IN "A SUNDAY FOR CASTING YOUR NETS ON THE OTHER SIDE" IS AVAILABLE TO PARTICIPATING CONGREGATIONS. FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO BECOME INVOLVED, PLEASE CONTACT THE PROGRAM'S CHAPLAIN, JOHN DORY, AT [JohnDory@uccny.org](mailto:JohnDory@uccny.org).

Slide 2



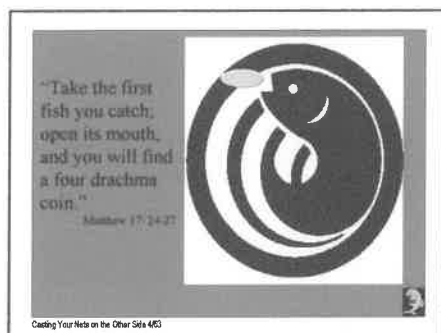
Hello. My name is John Dory, and I serve as the chaplain for *Casting Your Nets on the Other Side*.

Slide 3



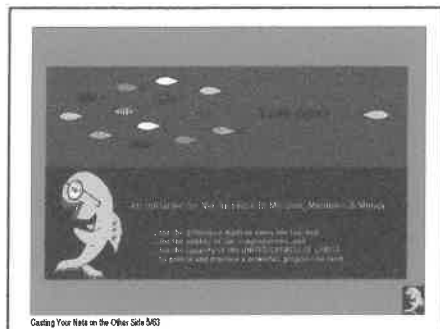
My kind has always been common in the Sea of Galilee, but I've recently become popular in North America too, as the environmentally-friendly and healthy whitefish, Tilapia.

Slide 4



I got my name from a story in Matthew's Gospel. You might remember when Jesus tells Peter he'll find a coin in the mouth of a fish. That was my first ministry! Ever since then, around the Mediterranean, I've been known as "St. Peter's Fish." Since I've been in England, I've used 'John Dory,' the British commonplace name for St. Peter.

Slide 5



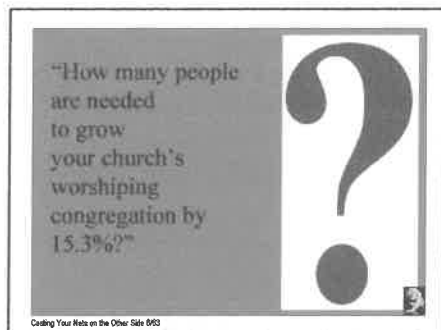
I'm with you today to introduce "Casting Your Nets on the Other Side." CYN, as it's known, is a discernment and spiritual growth initiative of the NYConference.

"CYN" helps healthy congregations:

- ~reach towards the mission for which God has gathered and sent them;
- ~relate to more people through life-changing ministries;
- ~recruit and encourage forward-looking leaders;
- ~raise up new traditions, as well as update the tried and true;
- ~reflect God's love in uniquely compelling ways.

**Instead of offering "one size fits all" or "cookie cutter" solutions, 'Casting Your Nets' is a process for local churches to develop for themselves new ways to share God's love further— ways that are appropriate to who they are and for whom God is calling them to reach out to.**

Slide 6



Sharing the love of God with more people is "Casting Your Nets" basic challenge: How many people would your church need to grow its worshiping congregation by 15.3%?

**(Before you get all worried about exact figures, relax: this is an exercise in dreaming, to get the Spirit flowing.)**

## Slide 7



Remember: numbers are just a graphic way to point toward what really matters: God's joy over every new person welcomed and included.

So here's the crux of what "Casting Your Nets" asks of your church:

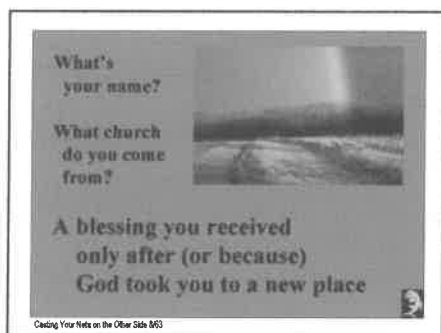
How can your congregation show more people God's love?  
(Pause)

What can your church do to make it easier for people to find a church home with you?

**This is a serious question, but it's too early for responses. Let's wait to begin sharing ideas. Still, ask yourself now: what's one thing I would do to make church "user-friendly" for more people.**

**Let me remind you again: we are dreaming, so be bold and go with the flow.**

## Slide 8



That's it for my introductions. Now I'd like to hear who you are. Can you give your name and your home church? And then, in just a sentence, share a blessing you received only after (or because) God sent you some place new.'

*[Instructions: a. The leader might present a personal example to prompt the sharing, for example: "I only learned how much I am thankful for as an American the*

*first time I traveled outside of the U.S. to someplace foreign.”*

*b. When the introductions are done among people who already know each other, “home church” can be redefined as “the church you grew up in” or “the first church you considered home.”*

*c. If the presentation is being used in a larger worship setting, where it’s hard for everyone to introduce him or herself, a leader might introduce any visitors and then ask the whole body for some of the “farthest a-stream” churches of origin, then ask worshipers to “turn to your neighbor” for sharing the story of blessing.]*

Slide 9



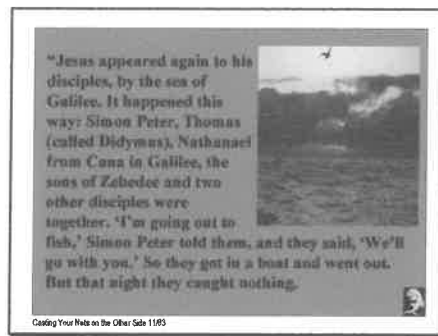
Thanks for sharing: our churches are never stronger than the relationships that create them. I am continually impressed by the people I meet as chaplain for “Casting Your Nets.” We are such a gifted church, with so much to offer...

Slide 10



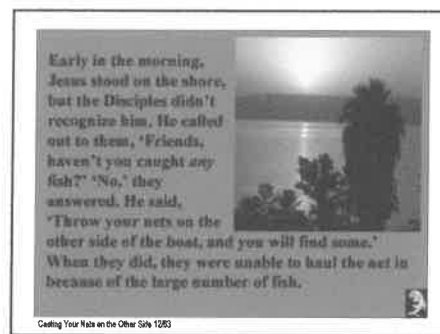
**“Casting your Nets” begins with one of John Dory’s favorite Bible stories, the opening of the final chapter of the Gospel of John. As we read it together, listen for what God is saying to us.**

Slide 11



*(Group begins to read together.)*

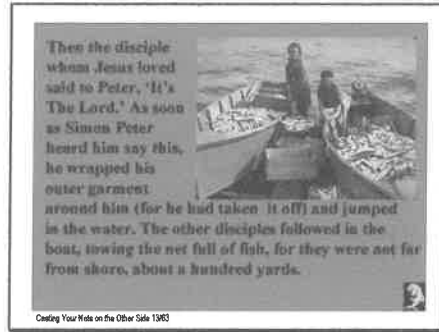
Slide 12



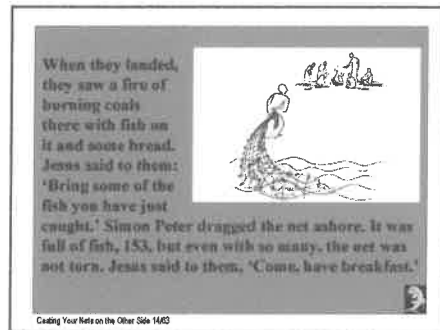
*(group reading)*



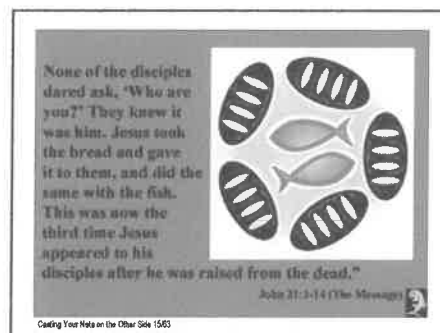
## Slide 13

*(group reading)*

## Slide 14

*(group reading)*

## Slide 15



*(after group finishes reading:)*  
**God always adds blessing to the reading of the word. May we bless it by not only hearing, but even more so by living and sharing its blessing.**

Slide 16



Some biblical scholars think John's story about Jesus originally ended earlier-- before the episode you just read.

In their theory, John's Gospel was finished when Jesus blessed, breathed on, and commissioned his disciples for ministry.

And what we know now as the final chapter 21-- in these scholars' opinions-- were additional stories added afterwards by John's students or by a later 'editor.'

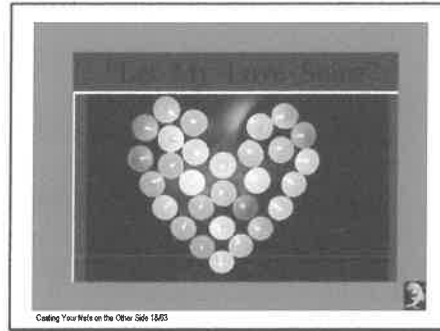
Slide 17



For those scholars, this passage then would have been the ending of the 4<sup>th</sup> Gospel:

**“Just as the Father sent me, I send you. Then Jesus took a deep breath and breathed into them: ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive someone’s sins, they’re gone for good, If you don’t forgive sins, what are you going to do with them?’”**

## Slide 18

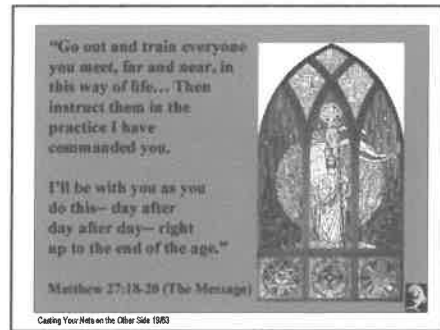


But I'm not so sure of their theory. When Matthew, Mark and Luke retell Jesus' life, all three of their Gospels conclude with the church's mission to the world—

Jesus' call for his followers to share his love with all the world, to become the community of faith by which:

- ~the lost are found,
- ~the sick are healed,
- ~the oppressed are freed, and
- ~many are led to abundant life.

## Slide 19



For example, this is how Matthew ends his telling of the Good News:

**Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life... Then instruct them in the practice I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this— day after day after day— right up to the end of the age."**

## Slide 20



I guess, considering who I am, it's not a total surprise, but I believe this 'fishing story' at the end of John's Gospel is integral, gracious and absolutely necessary:

- ~a foreshadowing of the "on again/off again" career of the church, and
- ~Jesus' promise, nonetheless, of staying nearby, to help us.

Peter's going fishing is like Winslow Homer's painting "The Veteran in a New Field of Wheat:" --a soldier returning home from the Civil War comes

across a field ready for harvest. Rather than continuing homeward, the veteran picks up the scythe and begins to cut wheat in a stranger's field.

Aren't the disciples in a similar situation? After all they have been through, what to do next is neither clear nor certain.

We all know what that's like... feeling bewildered about where we are headed.

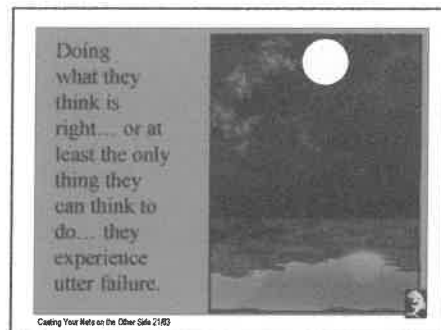
So, instead of endless possibilities, why not turn to necessary work that's at hand: in Peter's case, heading out in the boat.

By grace, in taking the initiative, the disciples put themselves in a place where the risen Christ meets them.

But first, all night long they fish, but catch nothing.

Having done what they thought was right-- or at least the only thing that occurred to them to do-- they experience utter failure.

Slide 21



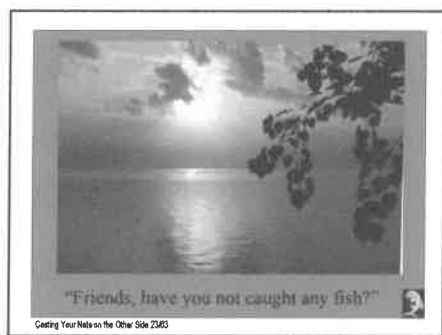
## Slide 22



The turning point comes with the dawn of a new day: Jesus appears on the shore, watching them on the lake.

Still, somehow, they don't recognize him, not even when he speaks to them.

## Slide 23



His question-- interestingly from "a stranger" who addresses them as "Friends"-- expects a negative answer.

Perhaps it was the common way of asking hunters and fishermen if they had had any success. Or, maybe, it's because Jesus already knows the answer.

## Slide 24



Notice, friends, this bystander doesn't offer an idle suggestion: "If you try over there, you *might* catch some fish."

Instead, he promises, "If they only cast their nets in a new way, they will find fish."

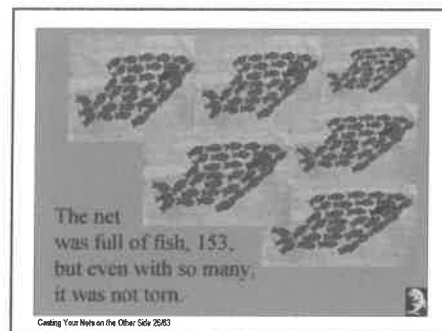
## Slide 25



That's why, as you've heard, this Bible story is one of my favorites: the resurrected Lord is recognized-- in this encounter-- not by showing his wounds, or even in breaking bread for us, but through the miraculous catch-- an abundance that comes from following Jesus' lead.

But note clearly the kind of abundance Jesus promises. His is not a Gospel of prosperity, but of grace. The abundance of the miraculous catch is not about how much we possess in Christ Jesus, but about how many through Him we can share God's love with.

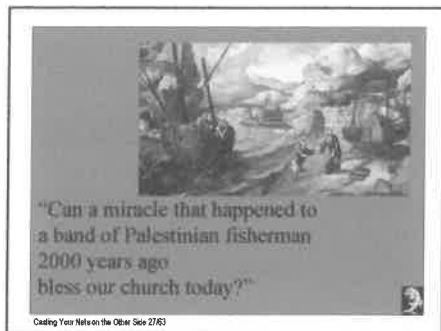
## Slide 26



The church has interpreted...  
~the 153 fish to represent a large influx of culturally different newcomers from outside the established faith community, and  
~the unbroken net has been seen as the community's ability to receive them.

It was my inspiration to make that curious number into a deliberate membership growth target in the "Casting Your Nets" initiative: 15.3%.

Slide 27

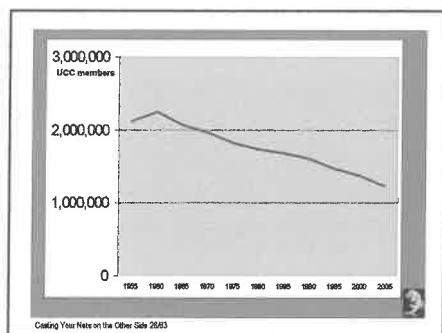


But let's not get ahead of ourselves. I think, more often these days, our churches recognize themselves in the pre-miracle part of the story:

Aren't we today like the disciples— either not sure what to do next, or feeling like we have fished all night and caught nothing?

So, what promise could Jesus' direction to throw your nets on the other side offer our congregations today?

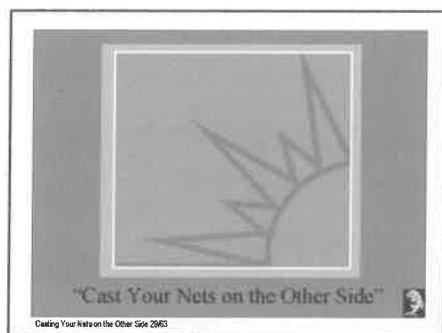
Slide 28



Don't many of our local churches feel like we have tried everything to no avail— "labored all night long, and caught nothing"? It almost seems as if there aren't any fish left.

But even as church membership and attendance have declined significantly, the North American population has continued to grow. It's just, our churches keep speaking to fewer and fewer people

Slide 29

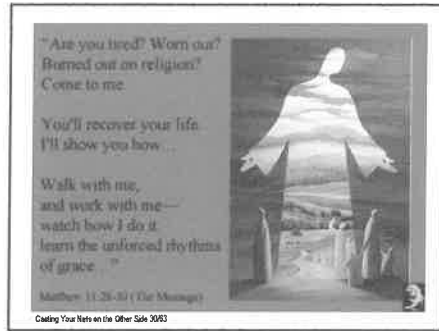


Could we be at the dawn of a new day for the United Church?

Is Jesus on the other shore, calling us, promising us...  
~if only we'd try other ways...  
~if only we'd look in new directions...

we WILL (not *might*!) begin engaging more, new people in our ministries and sharing the love of God farther.

Slide 30

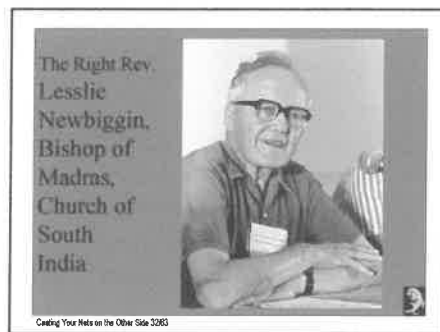


Is Jesus saying something to us— not just showing us compassion, but offering help for our ecclesiastical empty nets?  
**Let's read Christ's invitation together...**

Slide 31



Slide 32



For a fish, I've led a long and varied life!  
I was in Manchester, England in the early 80's when Bishop Lesslie Newbiggin came back from India for retirement. Bishop Newbiggin was shocked by how much the churches in Europe and North America had changed in the 40 years he had been serving the Church of South India.



**APPENDIX I**  
**NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER ARTICLE**

**CASTING OUR NETS HERE AT CHATTERTON HILL CHURCH**

"Jesus called out to the Disciples in the boat, 'Friends, haven't you any fish?' 'No,' they answered. Jesus responded, 'Throw your net on the [left] side of the boat, and you will find some.' When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the huge number of fish." John 21:5-6

Our thanks to all of you for your participation in our first *Casting Your Nets* event on October 15. We have gotten off to a good start with our church timeline and mapping the neighborhood. We will continue to work on both tasks. Please feel free to tell Rev. Bonnie what other items you would like added to the timeline as we go, or bring pictures to bring it to life even more. Three small mapping teams will be working on refining the borders of our area, and adding people, places, and institutions.

We will gather again to work on this as a church on November 19, and move on toward our Action Plans. Please mark this on your calendar, and plan to attend.

***God is still speaking, and, through Jesus, calling us to "Cast Our Nets!"***

---

**Chatterings**

*The Chatterton Hill Church*

*85 Chatterton Avenue White Plains, New York 10606*

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**APPENDIX J**

**WORSHIP BULLETIN FOR *CYN SUNDAY* # 2**

**CASTING YOUR NETS**  
 at  
**The Chatterton Hill Church White Plains, New York**  
 November 19, 2006 11:00 a.m.  
 Ruth Dwyer, Organist & Choir Director  
 The Rev. Bonnie Miller, Minister

**GATHERING**

**A Gift of Music to Gather Us**  
**Singing Together** "Enter, Rejoice, and Come In"  
 New Century Hymnal #73 *(please stand, if you are able)*  
**Welcome**

**SENSING GOD'S PRESENCE**

**Beginning This Day's Conversation with God**

**A Psalm for Today**

Leader: You, God, are our source of help and hope, offering real life—  
 thanksgiving, community, and service.

PEOPLE: **Show us, with others and on our own, the difference your  
 love makes.**

Leader: Your care extends to the ends of the earth; you welcome all—  
 the stranger as a neighbor, the enemy like a friend.

PEOPLE: **Help us to be good news to others.**

Leader: You have promised to be with us always, especially when we  
 walk with Jesus.

PEOPLE: **Call us forward in the strength of the Spirit, to serve all the  
 world in Jesus' name.**

Leader: You send us on journeys, near and far, to share the gifts you  
 freely give,

PEOPLE: **To discover wonder in Christ,**

Leader: To develop love like Jesus',

PEOPLE: **And to distribute the blessings of belonging and believing.**

Leader: May this church bring Christ to the world and people to Jesus,

ALL: **And reflect your love and light for all creation.**

**Choir Response "Sweet, Sweet Spirit"**

**There's a sweet, sweet spirit in this place, and we know that it's the Spirit of  
 the Lord.**

**There are sweet expressions on each face, and we know that it's the Presence of the Lord.**

**Sweet Holy Spirit, Sweet Heavenly Dove, stay right here with us, filling us with your love.**

**And for these blessings, we lift our hearts in praise.**

**Without a doubt we'll know that we have been revived, when we shall leave this place.**

#### **Admitting Our Shortcomings** *(praying together in unison)*

**Although you have made us a strong, capable church, we still doubt ourselves. We don't grasp what you expect of us. We don't understand that whatever you ask is possible.**

**In the faces of changes all around us—in the world, in the church, in our families—we often feel alone and on our own. We hold on to what we know, rather than opening ourselves to new ways. Resisting, we lose touch with ourselves, our neighbors, and you.**

**Forgive us, God. You have promised us a new way, full of faith and power. Give us a fresh start—overflowing with vision and courage—so that we may share your love in church and throughout the world.**

#### **Reassurance that God Loves Us**

#### ***LISTENING FOR GOD***

**A Gift from the Choir** "Here Am I, Lord" John Ness Beck

**A Story from the Bible** ~ The Feeding of More Than 5,000

*(in unison, on insert, from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John)*

**Our Part in the Story** ~ "What Is Jesus Asking of Us?"

#### ***SHARING GOD'S GOODNESS***

**Singing Together** "You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore"

*New Century Hymnal #173 (please stand if you are able)*

**Our Prayers and Gifts** ~ *during the offering, please bring your*

*financial support for ministry and your "fish prayer card" to the table.*

**Moving Forward with Power and Purpose**

**Singing Together** "Called as Partners in Christ's Service"

*New Century Hymnal #495 (please stand if you are able)*

**Good Words for Going Forth**

**The Gift of Music that Sends Us to Serve**

**APPENDIX K**  
**WORSHIP SCRIPT FOR *CYN SUNDAY* # 2**

*A Sunday for*  
**CASTING YOUR NETS ON THE OTHER SIDE**

at

**Chatterton Hill Church**

**White Plains, New York**

November 19, 2006 at 11:00 o'clock

**GATHERING**

**The Gift of Music to Gather Us**

**Singing Together** (*please stand, if you are able*)      “Enter, Rejoice, and Come In”  
New Century Hymnal # 73

**{Bonnie Miller}**

**Welcome** [Welcome to another Casting Your Nets Sunday. Today will again be a Bit different as Casting Your Nets challenges us to find God in new ways as well as in tried and true traditions. We're glad Michael is back with us for today. Arelis Insook are also going to help this morning with worship.]

In the United Church of Christ, no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, we hope you feel welcomed here.]

**SENSING GOD'S PRESENCE**

**{Michael}**

**Beginning this Day's Conversation with God** [I'd like to begin our conversation by asking if God had taught you anything lately. Does anyone have an experience that you learned something from God?...

[praying] For the ways you touch our lives, Lord, we give thanks. And we ask that you would draw near to us now, and touch us, that we might learn and live and love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**{Arelis} Psalm for Today**

Leader: You, God, are our source of help and hope, offering real life—  
thanksgiving, community and service.

PEOPLE: **Show us, with others and on our own, the difference your love makes.**

Leader: Your care extends to the end of earth; you welcome all-- the stranger as a neighbor, the enemy like the friend.

PEOPLE: **Help us to be good news to others.**

Leader: You have promised to be with us always, especially when we walk with Jesus.

PEOPLE: **Call us forward in the strength of the Spirit, to serve all the world in Jesus' name.**

Leader: You send us on journeys, near and far, to share the gifts you freely give:

PEOPLE: **To discover wonder in Christ;**  
 Leader: To develop love like Jesus';  
 PEOPLE: **To distribute the blessings of belonging and believing;**  
 Leader: May this church bring Christ to the world and bring people to Jesus,  
 PEOPLE: **And reflect your love and light for all creation.**

### **Choir Response**

“Sweet, Sweet Spirit”

There's a sweet, sweet spirit in this place, and we know that it's the Spirit of the Lord,  
 There are sweet expressions on each face, and we know that it's the Presence of the Lord.  
 Sweet Holy Spirit, Sweet Heavenly Dove, stay right here with us, filling us with your love.  
 And for these blessings, we lift our hearts in praise:  
 Without a doubt we'll know we've been revived when we shall leave this place.

### **{Insook}**

#### **Admitting our Shortcomings** *(praying together in unison)*

**Although you make us a strong, capable church, we still doubt ourselves. We don't grasp what you expect of us. We don't understand that whatever you ask is possible. In the face of changes all around us—in the world, in the church, in our families—we often feel alone and on our own. We hold on to what we know, rather than opening ourselves to your new day. Resisting, we lose touch with ourselves, our neighbors and you. Forgive us, God. You have promised us new ways, full of faith and power. Give us a fresh start—overflowing with vision and courage-- so we may share your love in church and throughout the world. Amen.**

**{Insook} Reassurance that God Loves Us** [This is what makes all the difference in the world: that God has loved you; that God loves you still and that God will love you always. This is the good news that brings new life.]

### **LISTENING FOR GOD**

#### **A Gift from the Choir**

#### **{Bonnie Miller}**

**A Story from the Bible** ~ “Feeding more the 5000” [will you join with me in reading our scripture passage for today.]

#### **{Michael}**

**Our Part in the Story** ~ “Why Is Jesus Sending Us?”

### **SHARING GOD'S GOODNESS**

#### **{Spanish speaking women leading}**

**Singing Together** *(please stand, if you are able)* “You Have Come Down  
 to the Lakeshore” #173

Offering Our Prayers and Gifts (musician playing “Loaves Abound”)



[Remember how last time we had “A Sunday for Casting Your Nets on the Other Side,” our prayers were for people we hoped this church could **carry God’s love to. Those prayers are in the net on the wall. Today, I want you to offer in prayer, what God’s calling this church to. You might write on your fish prayer card, “Food for people who are hungry” or “Hope for those who are going through a divorce” or “A church home for people who don’t think they could ever fit into church.” But before you begin writing, imagine yourselves in that crowd of 5,000, looking for the child with the loaves and fish. You’re not sure who the boy is, just one more regular person like all of us. The Bible doesn’t even give his name. But he heard Jesus’ suggestion and undertook what he could, and that mattered, made a difference, a miracle now so celebrated in the NT. His was a simple act of faith that transformed a crowd into a community. He could be any of us. He could be all of us. You waded through the crowd, searching for this blessed child. Finally, you see him in one of the groups of people, in a circle of friends and neighbors now widened to include strangers who also came to be near Jesus. As he takes his place to eat with the others, you ask him, “That was your supper. How could you afford to give it all to these people?” He looks up, a bit surprised, and says, “It was my supper. How could I afford not to share it? Beloved, on your fish prayer card, write a mission or two you feel this church cannot afford not to share with God’s world... Once you are finished, bring your “fish prayer cards” naming the missions you hope to accomplish and your offering which part of the resources that make this possible forward. And stay up, for a prayer together and the Lord’s prayer.]**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever.

**Singing Together** (please stand, if you are able)

“Called as Partners in Christ’s Service” NCH # 495 (sung to the tune *Hyfrodol*)

*{Arelis, Insook, Bonnie}*

*Good Words for Going Forth [May the God who shakes heaven and earth, whom death could not contain, who lives to disturb and to heal, bless us now and forever with the power to go forth and live proclaiming the gospel. Amen.]*

### **The Gift of Music to Leave With**

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“Casting Your Nets on the Other Side” (CYN) is a discernment and spiritual growth ministry of the NYConference’s Commission on Revitalization, Evangelism and Church Development. It is a process to help healthy churches re-tool their ministries—transforming leaders and mobilizing congregations to recognize what they have to offer and to recast it for a new day. If you want more information about this program, please speak with your pastor.

**APPENDIX L**  
**SERMON FOR *CYN SUNDAY* # 2**

## A Glass Half Full

In a sermon at Riverside Church, Bill Coffin pointed out:

‘In the Holy Land there are two ancient bodies of water. In one, fish splash, birds sing, roots seek sustenance and people find their living. Around the other, there is neither fish, nor bird, nor leaf anywhere near. Their difference is not in their source-- the Jordan River feeds both-- but in what these two bodies do with that life-giving water. For every drop the Sea of Galilee takes in, it also sends forth. The Sea of Galilee gives and in so doing, it lives. The other gives nothing and is called the Dead Sea.’”

The question is, church: do we share the living waters we have been given, or do we try holding them for ourselves.

I worry our congregations, rather than offering refreshing drink to the thirsty, a washing for those who need to be clean, or even irrigation for food crops, rather we hold on to, even hoard life-giving resources for ourselves.

As if there’s not enough. And if we believe resources are scarce, we guard ourselves against the needs of others and watch out for ourselves. It becomes a struggle-- how to cut up a limited pie. Rather than permission-giving, we become limit-makers, leaning more heavily towards “no” than “yes.”

Because money is tight, we say “no” to certain expenditures.  
Because we have so little available time or attention, we say “no” new opportunities.

And every time you say “no” to some thing, you are saying “no” to some one for whom that thing represents what is very important.

Call it what you will: gate-keeping, prioritizing, budgeting, triage, filtering, exclusion.

Whatever we call it, the effect is the same: people get discouraged, feel overlooked, get turned away, put out.

And when that happens, who doesn’t say, “I guess if the others don’t see things the way I do, if I’m not understood or heard or appreciated, if I’m just different, I won’t bother going to another meeting.”

Or we express our displeasure by becoming complainers. Or dragging our feet.

And every time that happens—way, way too often-- our church community shrinks in energy, commitment and, eventually, people. We end up with even fewer resources and what can we do but be even more cautious and discerning.

The Bible passages we read together, they offer another, a better way of being community and church together. We dedicate ourselves to saying “yes.” We identify people’s gifts and appreciate their interest. You’ll be amazed how talented people around here are. And once we feel sufficiently strong to uncircle the wagons and look outward, seeking others with whom to relate and to work, you won’t believe how easily the circle of our sharing grows even larger. And, then, pooling these resources, gifts, talents, experiences and interests, it’s a miracle what we can do together.

What formerly you could only fret about as needs, may turn out to have a silver lining. Or even better. “Us and them” is transformed to “all of us” because we recognize how we are in this together. Individual contributions matter more as they are involved in something meaningful that is beyond ourselves. We CAN move forward on our abundance. We open up new relationships. We release people to act on their God-given calls.

The positive energy, hopefulness, grows and multiplies among us. Yes, the promise of our faith turns out to be true: we are more together than we could ever be on our own. It’s a kind of spiritual economy that Dr. King tried to teach us: your gain is my gain is our gain.

“Wonderful,” you are thinking, “the kind of message we hope to hear in church on Sunday morning. Would that such abundance were so, but do things really work that way, even here in church?”

I understand your doubtfulness. We live in a world organized around scarcity. But let me ask you something:

If I experience more love, do you get less? Think about it. Or if I gain in faith, must that necessarily leave someone else wanting? Likewise, if my life is filled with more and more community, do others have to experience an opposite deficit of community? Or can the greater community I know, actually offer greater community for all?

You see, in the things that matter most in life, one person’s abundance does not come out of another’s supply. Because this abundance comes from God’s provision, rather than our ability to create, earn, gather or preserve.

Let me try something different with the Feeding of the 5000.

It’s the only miracle found in all 4 Gospels. More often than not, this story is taken for granted, a Sunday School illustration of Jesus’ miraculous powers. Like walking on water or healing the sick, this miracle proves that Jesus is the Son of God. But what if it means something else, something more?

The disciples, often struggling with their disbelief, are stuck on what they don’t have. It’s considered a deserted place, though more than 5000 people are there. A deserted place, despite a grassy hillside comfortable enough to welcome the crowd.

But the disciples are stuck on what they don't have: you can tell when people start talking about money-- six month's wages and 200 denarii—you know then that they're working from a scarcity mentality.

Next the disciples want to simply send everyone away, as if everyone in that crowd could afford to buy dinner. More than anything really caring about the needs of the multitude, the disciples are worried about themselves and putting off any responsibility they might have.

But Jesus doesn't let them off the hook. When they ask them how they could possibly feed this multitude, Jesus says, "Go and see what you have." He directs them to do a bit of self-inventorying, to see if they might have more than they thought.

I like John's telling of the story, in which it's a child who gets what Jesus is suggesting. Was he the only one among over 5000 who headed out to the country that day for revival, the only one who brought food? Or was he just the first to look down in his picnic basket and notice not how empty it was, but instead to see what he had.

The little guy has some food that he suddenly appreciates the importance of, a value that will only be increased, he gets Jesus saying, by sharing.

So the little boy steps out of the anonymous crowd and offers what he has to Andrew, who in turn passes it to Jesus. It's only 5 loaves and 2 fishes, but the child recognized what he had been given. So does Jesus.

Jesus lifts the loaves and fishes, looks to heaven, and parcels them out to the disciples to pass among the people.

And you know what I think happens, in this act of giving, people finally see how they can share the blessing.

Remember the people have been gathered in these small groups. Why? What happens in those small groups? None of the stories tell us. Maybe Jesus waved his hands and made food appear on everyone's plate. But if Jesus' lesson was that he would take care of everything, why does he begin asking the disciples to check what their supply? And why bother with dividing the multitude up into a hundred of groups of 50?

Ironically, I have come to believe Jesus is telling the disciples and the crowds and us not to depend on someone else to perform a miracle and fill our needs. Both Mark and Matthew are adamant: that food did not come down from heaven like manna. Yet, when everyone was filled, there were 12 baskets full of what was left over.

Did you ever think, that instead of waving his hand and magically making the food appear, maybe Jesus got the people thinking differently, seeing differently and acting differently. He said, "stop worrying so much about what you lack. look for what you

have. The little kid got it first. But as that little child fished his meager supper out of his backpack in a monumental act of faith, and as Jesus held up this child's simple gift as an act love in community, maybe, just maybe the others started to catch on. Instead of being taken care of, or even needing to take care of themselves, the people remembered and appreciated what they already possessed. Inspired, they began to pull from their own baskets, satchels, and bags, an abundance of food.

Some of you probably don't like my interpretation, because you fear I've taken the miracle out of the story. But I see an even greater miracle: Jesus helped people see themselves and one another in a whole new way. He called them out of their self-centeredness and fear. And that made something quite unexpected, even miraculous, happen: from a crowd that seemed to have nothing, there came an outflowing of sharing, the grace of cooperation... such that all were fed. Admittedly, that doesn't happen often enough in our world, but infrequency does not mean impossibility.

#### GO TO THE HALF FULL GLASS

Whenever we let go of our scarcity thinking, and the fear that engenders it... when we focus instead on and begin to rediscover what we have...

...When we see the glass half-full...

how much can be done with just this much abundant and powerful life-giving water,  
 how much can be done when each of us shares the water we have been given,  
 how our individual gifts are complements of and multiplied by the gifts of others,  
 how this new-found abundance empowers us to do what is most natural to us, what we  
 were created for—to share our blessings that we and others might live.

Amen.

**APPENDIX M**

**BULLETIN INSERT FOR *CYN SUNDAY* # 2**

### **The Feeding of More than 5000**

...Jesus went to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. A large crowd kept following him, because they saw the signs he was doing for the sick. Jesus went up the mountain and sat down there with his disciples. Now the Passover, the nation's festival, was near. When Jesus looked up and saw a large crowd coming to him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" He said that to test Philip, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered, "Six months wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little. (*John 6:1-7*)

When it was evening, the disciples came to Jesus and said, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the village and buy food for themselves." Jesus responded, "They need not go away; you give them something to eat." (*Matthew 14:15-16*)

The disciples said to Jesus, "Are we to go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread, and give it to them to eat?" And Jesus said to them, "How many loaves have you? Go and see." (*Mark 6:37-38*)

One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" (*John 6:8-9*)

And Jesus said to his disciples, "Make them sit down in groups of about 50 each." (*Luke 9:14*)

Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about 5000 in all. (*John 6:10*)

Taking the five loaves and two fish, Jesus looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people; and he divided the two fish among them all. (*Mark 6:41*)

And all ate and were filled. (*Luke 9:17*)

When everyone was full, Jesus told his disciples, "Gather up the what is left over, so that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up, and from the remnants of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, the disciples filled twelve baskets. (*John 6: 12-13*)

Those who had eaten the loaves numbered five thousand men. (*Mark 6:44*)

When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world." (*John 6:14*)



## **APPENDIX N**

### **WORKSHOP SCRIPT FOR *CYN SUNDAY* # 2**

### **Script for Asset Mapping: (5 minutes)**

God has already given us what we need to do what God asks of us. But we sometimes do not recognize all the gifts among us or how they might fit together. Particularly in church these days, worried about things not being the way they used to be, we fall into seeing “the glass half empty.” Asset Mapping helps us turn our negative habit around—helping us to recognize our glasses as half full, or maybe even more...

Asset Mapping sounds more technical and difficult than it is. Though we are going to engage in a specific process, Assets Mapping is what we do every time we work together as a group to solve a problem.

First, we are going to recognize and list some of the strengths, talents and gifts in this community. Then we are going to brainstorm how we might combine those various assets to get things done. In this case, you might try to organize actions to advance your specific ministry area, but if something else occurs to you, go with it. Finally, from all the possibilities our groups come up with, we are going to allow you to decide for yourselves which action you would most like to take part in.

Pass out to each person a stack of 20 half sheets (8 and ½” x 7”) and a marker.

### **a. Recognizing our Assets (30 minutes)**

Each of you will come up with a list of this faith community’s assets by writing them on these pieces of paper as we ask you the following questions. We don’t need to summarize or catalogue all of the congregation’s assets. Instead, we want to get a sample of the rich and varied strengths this community has to do the work God desires of us.

As you hear the question, write down a few assets that come to mind. If you think of more assets, great, but each asset needs to be written on its own piece of paper in letters that are large and legible enough that later your group will be able to read it from a distance. If a question doesn’t suggest any answer to you, that is ok, too; simply wait for the next question.

After each question, when everyone in your group is finished writing their assets, put your sheets in a pile in the center of the table.

Ready?

- ~What is a physical asset that is unique to this congregation?
- ~What is something that you care a lot about?
- ~What is something you know a lot about?
- ~Name a talent or skill you see in someone else in your group.
- ~Something that you spend money on?
- ~What are some things that you can do or make with your hands?
- ~What are some things that you can make or do that someone would pay you for?

- ~What businesses are represented in this congregation?
- ~What are the gifts that allow this congregation to survive?
- ~What are the assets you might overlook in yourself or this church because it's out of sight or out of mind?
- ~What did you used to be good at?
- ~What's the craziest thing you do? Or something that people don't know about you?
- ~What are some assets you only use on special occasions?
- ~Name a contact or resource you can personally access in your work place or the community.
- ~One skill you bring from your family life.
- ~What kind of cultural activity or recreation do you enjoy?

### **b. Organizing Our Assets for a Purpose (30 minutes)**

Now we have to keep working together. You're going to take all the sheets you've created within your group, and begin to look for patterns. Do not worry about keeping people's answers together. Just spread them all out, and begin to rearrange them. While you do this, keep your team's ministry focus in the back of your mind. The idea is to begin to brainstorm how the assets you have come up with relate to your ministry area. Rearrange them as many ways as you want.

Once all the groups have worked on this task for about fifteen minutes, say:

Now, as a group, look over all the assets you have in front of you. Thinking about all the things that God wants our church to accomplish, and the gifts God has given us to do so, can you begin to see various assets that you might put together to do God's will?

Show them a poster board with the following assets on it. Tell them it's a classic example from frontier times in the U.S. Can anyone guess what the action was?

Empty land. Fresh produce. Horses and cows. Community spirit. A pig to be slaughtered. Timber to be cut. Carpentry skills and tools. Strong shoulders, backs and arms. Skills at cooking in mass. Nails. A sawmill. Would all of this be possible without the community spirit to pull together and do together what none could do by him or herself.

The classic example of organizing assets is a barn raising.

Can you begin to see how you might connect various assets for a purpose? Talk with each other about your ideas. Move the sheets around to create the skill sets you need to accomplish various actions. (If you need to use an asset more than once, simply create another sheet of paper for it in the second cluster—that's a great aspect of God's gifts, they are not limited resources.) Give a name to, and make a sign for each action you organize.

### **3. Group sharing (10 minutes)**

Ask each group to report on the assets they discovered and how they organized them for certain actions.

#### **4. Reflecting on what we have done together (10 minutes)**

Thank everyone for their participation. Then say, “Let’s think about what we have done here together:

Did anything surprise you about this experience?

How did it feel to write down your assets?

What was it like organizing the assets into actions?

What was the experience of choosing with your feet like?

Is there anything unexpected about the kinds of actions that were organized?

What has this way of discerning God’s will already accomplished?

Distribute blank Action Forms, and say, “At our next Congregational Retreat, we will utilize what we have done today with our Asset Mapping to develop our more formalized Action Plans for evolving our Mission, Fellowship, Worship, Generosity and Invitation to engage more people in meaningful ministry. To do so, we will be using these forms. Before that time, however, we’d like you to begin to put some of your brainstorm s into action. Continue to discuss some of the ideas you came up with today with your group, and try something. Remember that it can be a “baby step”, and it is only a trial. That way, when we come back next time, we will be able to see how open the congregation was to your ideas, and how effective your ideas were. But now, let’s close with a prayer:

Good and gracious Lord, your gifts know no end. And faith is equally without limit. When one person grows in faith, rather than taking from another’s faith, it strengthens others’, everyone’s. Likewise, the strengths you have given us, we need not fear that they will be used up. No, in putting them together, they are magnified and multiplied. Together, we are stronger and create new strengths to do more and more your will.

For all your gifts, including the table about to be set before us, and all the hands involved in making this food possible, we give thanks. Continue to inspire us in the weeks between this, and our next workshop, that we might be motivated to act upon our imaginings born this day. Amen.”

**APPENDIX O**  
**DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

## DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

This is the table of demographics for all the zip codes that affect Chatterton Hill Church membership (as of December 2006).

	A	B	C	D	E	F
	10606	10603	10607	10601	10604	10605
Total population	16,252	16,333	7,025	9,829	10,628	20,259
(in 5 yrs)	+7.0%	+3.1%	+3.2%	+5.9%	+1.5%	+8.2%
Anglo	34.2%	44.7%	38.3%	30.3%	67.2%	68.3%
(in 5 yrs)	-14.6%	-10.3%	-10.5%	-14.1%	-7.1%	+1.4%
African-American	14.3%	29.7%	31.5%	24.3%	8.7%	9.4%
(in 5 yrs)	-7.3%	+6.7%	+2.0%	-3.3%	+3.3%	+13.5%
Hispanic-Latino	43.8%	16.5%	16.7%	35.1%	17.1%	15.4%
(in 5 yrs)	+26.5%	+24.5%	+24.4%	+24.0%	+25.9%	+27.0%
Asian	4.5%	6.1%	10.0%	6.7%	4.9%	4.9%
(in 5 yrs)	+23.9%	+22.6%	+22.9%	+30.9%	+27.8%	+29.2%
Other	3.2%	3.0%	3.5%	3.6%	2.1%	2.0%
(in 5 yrs)	+11.0%	+9.6%	+8.2%	13.7%	+12.5%	+22.0%

A – represents the zip code in which Chatterton Hill Church is located, in which 32.5% of the members reside (26)

B – represents a neighboring zip code, in which 21.25% of the members reside (17)

C – represents a neighboring zip code, in which 1.25% of the members reside (1)

D – represents a neighboring zip code, in which 2.5% of the members reside (2)

E – represents a neighboring zip code, in which 3.75% of the members reside (3)

F – represents a zip code on the other side of the city, in which 6.25% of the members reside (5)

note: 26.25% of the members (21) reside out-of-town, and rarely, if ever, attend.

## **APPENDIX P**

### **WORKSHOP RESULTS FOR *CYN SUNDAY* # 2**

## RESULTS OF ASSET MAPPING EXERCISE ~ CYN SUNDAY # 2 ~ 11/19/06

### **What is a physical asset that is unique to this congregation?**

kitchen (3x), elevator (5x), beautiful stone exterior (2x), Fellowship Hall, stained glass windows (2x), bell, can walk to church, hymnals

### **What is something that you care a lot about?**

work (3x), playing volleyball, exercise (2x), singing, eating, education (4x), music, cooking, Saturday afternoon ESL class (4x), my sight, looking for work, my family (14x), my church family, my health (2x), being honest, my friends (3x), animals, Atop the Mountain Ministries, family values, multiculturalism, mentoring, my memory, getting more members in the choir, walking, exercise, blind people, family reunions

### **What is something that you know a lot about?**

Math, cooking authentic South Asian food, organizing, history (2x), autism, crocheting, writing, indigenous Native Americans, creating tables and graphs, accounting, athletics, money management, organization (2x), gardening, flower arranging

### **Name a talent or skill you see in someone else in your group?**

knitting (9x), crocheting, cooking (7x), singing (8x), listening to people, soothing a crying baby, working with children, playing the piano, playing instruments, working with special education students, understanding Robert's Rules of Order, organization (2x), baking bread

### **Something that you spend money on.**

household bills (2x), rent (3x), food (8x), electricity, doctors, car insurance, lotto, shopping, only things that are necessary, mortgage payment, medical insurance (2x), counseling (2x), charity (2x), myself, clothing, vitamins and supplements, going to the opera, my car

### **What are some things you do or make with your hands?**

washing dishes, baking (4x), sweeping, playing guitar, knit hats and scarves, cooking

### **What are some things that you can make or do that someone would pay you for?**

tutoring, dresses, baking (2x), math, help with writing, keyboarding, sewing (2x) nursing advice, making wedding cakes, dressmaking, house renovation, playing the piano and organ, counseling,

### **What businesses are represented in this congregation?**

lawyer, music teacher (2x), teacher (5x), nurse (3x), MRI technician (2x), social worker, professor, sugar refining, United States Tennis Association, carpenter, real estate broker, piano player, housecleaner (5x), financial advisor, taking care of children (2x), musician,



**What are the gifts that allow this congregation to survive?**

worship, faith (2x), God (6x), spirituality, young adults, teenagers, loving people, shaking and holding hands, good relations, money (4x), gift of fellowship (4x), generosity of spirit and fellowship, beauty of spirit, friendship (2x), Saturday afternoon group, perseverance, our minister (7x), prayer group, longevity, love, generosity (2x), caring for people, the membership, adaptability to change

**What are the assets you might overlook in yourself or this church because it's out of sight or out of mind?**

potluck suppers, knowledge of past traditions, printing and copying ability, speaking ability, accounting and finance knowledge, drama (2x)

**What did you used to be good at?**

leading, singing (2x), walking fast

**What's the craziest thing you do? Or something you do that people don't know about you?**

dancing by myself, listening to music while cooking, scuba diving, dancing (x), I can play the guitar, stay up all night partying, play kids' video games (2x), climbing, singing duets with my husband, singing in my sleep, making snow angels, walking even when it's below zero, story-telling, telling jokes, I do crossword puzzles, dancing, I work too hard, watch TV late at night

**What are some assets you only use on special occasions?**

best china, fine china and silverware, dressing up

**Name a contact or resource you can personally access in your work place or the community.**

Centro Hispano, AMWAH (American Women of African Heritage), PTA, US Open tickets, The White Plains Beautification Foundation, Boy Scouts, my fraternity, National Council of English Teachers, Food Pantry, VFW, Rotary. Girl Scouts, our County Executive and Council members, our mayor (3x), Superintendent of the local school district, the doctors I work for, bankers, NAACP, architect, the Rev. Dr. James Forbes, single adults

**One skill you bring from your family life.**

making mitai (3x)

**What kind of cultural activity or recreation do you enjoy?**

theater (4x), reading (5x), group discussion, travel (5x), gardening, dancing and singing with my children, cooking and knitting, playing with my brother, playing with my children in the park, exercise, dancing, singing (2x), writing (2x), playing the piano, playing basketball, playing games, going to the movies (3x), listening to music, casinos, opera

**APPENDIX Q**  
**SAMPLE ACTION PLAN FORMS**

Action Plan: Focusing on Mission

**Your Task:**

**Reorienting your congregation to organize itself around and for mission**

*In order for your church to share God's love further, the congregation needs to understand itself as responding to God's call to do something for others, in other words 'gathered to be sent.' This is both the means and end of your existence as a church.*

*While many in our congregations today hunger for personal spiritual experience, the church must enable individuals to participate/invest in something greater than themselves. Likewise, congregations must come to see 'mission' is also about people in their neighborhoods whose need for a church home they could meet. All these components are needed to make your church's mission healthy, whole and holy.*

*As the leader of the Mission Action Team, you will attend The Mission School at the CYN Fishing School. There you will gather with leaders from congregations throughout the state who share this mission focus. Together you will work to understand and evolve the ways our UCC churches keep mission at their heart. The Mission School will provide you with resources, ideas, motivation, and effective evaluation. You will take all of this back to your local church setting to share with your Action Team.*

*Initially, your task is to work with your Action Team to devise a realistic, incremental Action Plan for the next few months. You should meet as soon as possible to work on the Mission Action Plan.*

*The form on the following page will assist you; use this as a "blueprint" or a sketch of what you hope to accomplish. (The form we have provided is hardly roomy enough for all your Action Team might want to include. Feel free to make for yourselves, longer, more complete narratives and notes.) When you have completed this form, please click on the button at the bottom to forward it to CYN.*

*God bless your fishing expedition! We wish you smooth sailing and a good catch!*

Mission Action Plan**Name of Church:** \_\_\_\_\_**Town/City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Association:** \_\_\_\_\_**Mission Leader:** \_\_\_\_\_**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_ **; Tel #** \_\_\_\_\_**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_**Who are the new people your church is trying to reach out to and engage in ministry?**

a) \_\_\_\_\_

b) \_\_\_\_\_

c) \_\_\_\_\_

**A STEP: What's one small way to make Mission more the focus of your church life, and also more compelling for the people you hope to reach/engage?** \_\_\_\_\_**How will this be accomplished?** \_\_\_\_\_**What resources are needed to accomplish this change?** \_\_\_\_\_**Who needs to be consulted (process)?** \_\_\_\_\_**How will the congregation be involved in this change?** \_\_\_\_\_**What will it cost?** \_\_\_\_\_ **How long will it take?** \_\_\_\_\_**What other changes will this step necessitate?** \_\_\_\_\_

*ANOTHER STEP: What's the next small way to make Mission more the focus of your church life, and also more compelling for the people you hope to reach/engage?*

*How will this be accomplished?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What resources are needed to accomplish this change?* \_\_\_\_\_

*Who needs to be consulted (process)?* \_\_\_\_\_

*How will the congregation be involved in this change?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What will it cost?* \_\_\_\_\_ *How long will it take?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What other changes will this step necessitate?* \_\_\_\_\_

*ANOTHER STEP: What's the next small way to make Mission more the focus of your church life, and also more compelling for the people you hope to reach/engage?*

*How will this be accomplished?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What resources are needed to accomplish this change?* \_\_\_\_\_

*Who needs to be consulted (process)?* \_\_\_\_\_

*How will the congregation be involved in this change?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What will it cost?* \_\_\_\_\_ *How long will it take?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What other changes will this step necessitate?* \_\_\_\_\_

Action Plan: Growing Fellowship

**Your Task:**

**Strengthening relationships, support, and process in your congregation**

*In order for your church to share God's love further, the congregation needs to deepen relationships and build trust/cooperation. You may need to live with conflict more creatively. The governance of your church might need to be streamlined, to lessen the resources spent "running the church" and to free up more time for ministry. Opportunities for service might need to be reorganized so people today recognize this work as worthy of being called "Christian" and worthwhile. Members need spiritual motivation and enrichment for the work they are called to do, and that work must be realistic and "do-able."*

*As the leader of the Fellowship Action Team, you will attend The Fellowship School at the CYN Fishing School. There you will gather with leaders from congregations throughout the state who share this fellowship focus. Together you will work to understand and evolve the ways our UCC churches strengthen their fellowship. The Fellowship School will provide you with resources, ideas, motivation, and effective evaluation. You will take all of this back to your local church setting to share with your Action Team.*

*Initially, your task is to work with your Action Team to devise a realistic, incremental Action Plan for the next few months. You should meet as soon as possible to work on the Fellowship Action Plan.*

*The form on the following page will assist you; use this as a "blueprint" or a sketch of what you hope to accomplish. (The form we have provided is hardly roomy enough for all your Action Team might want to include. Feel free to make for yourselves, longer, more complete narratives and notes.) When you have completed this form, please click on the button at the bottom to forward it to CYN.*

*God bless your fishing expedition! We wish you smooth sailing and a good catch!*

*Fellowship Action Plan*

**Name of Church:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Town/City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Association:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Fellowship Leader:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_ **; Tel #** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Who are the new people your church is trying to reach out to and engage in ministry?**

a) \_\_\_\_\_

b) \_\_\_\_\_

c) \_\_\_\_\_

**A STEP: What's 1 small way to strengthen the Fellowship in your church life, and also to make it more compelling for people you hope to reach/engage?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**How will this be accomplished?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**What resources are needed to accomplish this change?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Who needs to be consulted (process)?** \_\_\_\_\_

**How will the congregation be involved in this change?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**What will it cost?** \_\_\_\_\_ **How long will it take?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What other changes will this step necessitate?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*ANOTHER STEP: What's the next small way to strengthen the Fellowship in your church life, and also to make it more compelling for people you hope to reach/engage?*

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*How will this be accomplished?* \_\_\_\_\_

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*What resources are needed to accomplish this change?* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Who needs to be consulted (process)?* \_\_\_\_\_

*How will the congregation be involved in this change?* \_\_\_\_\_

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*What will it cost?* \_\_\_\_\_ *How long will it take?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What other changes will this step necessitate?* \_\_\_\_\_

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*ANOTHER STEP: What's the next small way to strengthen the Fellowship in your church life, and also to make it more compelling for people you hope to reach/engage?*

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*How will this be accomplished?* \_\_\_\_\_

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*What resources are needed to accomplish this change?* \_\_\_\_\_

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*Who needs to be consulted (process)?* \_\_\_\_\_



*How will the congregation be involved in this change?* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*What will it cost?* \_\_\_\_\_ *How long will it take?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What other changes will this step necessitate?* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Action Plan: Strengthening Worship

**Your Task:**

**Updating and deepening worship experiences in your congregation**

*In order for your church to share God's love further, the congregation needs intentionally to evolve its practices of worship such that excellent services are more accessible and meaningful to a larger 'audience.' This means offering people ways to be more open to an experience of the holy in heart, body, mind and spirit. To do this your team will need to coax the congregation to update its liturgical traditions, to develop deeper worship experiences, and to create new practices customized for wider communities.*

*As the leader of the Worship Action Team, you will attend The Worship School at the CYN Fishing School. There you will gather with leaders from congregations throughout the state who share this worship focus. Together you will work to understand and evolve the ways our UCC churches deepen their worship. The Worship School will provide you with resources, ideas, motivation, and effective evaluation. You will take all of this back to your local church setting to share with your Action Team.*

*Initially, your task is to work with your Action Team to devise a realistic, incremental Action Plan for the next few months. You should meet as soon as possible to work on the Worship Action Plan.*

*The form on the following page will assist you; use this as a "blueprint" or a sketch of what you hope to accomplish. (The form we have provided is hardly roomy enough for all your Action Team might want to include. Feel free to make for yourselves, longer, more complete narratives and notes.) When you have completed this form, please click on the button at the bottom to forward it to CYN.*

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Worship Action Plan**Name of Church:** \_\_\_\_\_**Town/City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Association:** \_\_\_\_\_**Worship Leader:** \_\_\_\_\_**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_ **; Tel #** \_\_\_\_\_**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_**Who are the new people your church is trying to reach out to and engage in ministry?****a)** \_\_\_\_\_**b)** \_\_\_\_\_**c)** \_\_\_\_\_**A STEP: What's one small way to deepen Worship in your church's life, and also to make it more compelling for the people you hope to reach/engage?** \_\_\_\_\_**How will this be accomplished?** \_\_\_\_\_**What resources are needed to accomplish this change?** \_\_\_\_\_**Who needs to be consulted (process)?** \_\_\_\_\_**How will the congregation be involved in this change?** \_\_\_\_\_**What will it cost?** \_\_\_\_\_ **How long will it take?** \_\_\_\_\_**What other changes will this step necessitate?** \_\_\_\_\_

*ANOTHER STEP: What's the next small way to deepen Worship in your church's life, and also make it more compelling for the people you hope to reach/engage?* \_\_\_\_\_

*How will this be accomplished?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What resources are needed to accomplish this change?* \_\_\_\_\_

*Who needs to be consulted (process)?* \_\_\_\_\_

*How will the congregation be involved in this change?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What will it cost?* \_\_\_\_\_

*How long will it take?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What other changes will this step necessitate?* \_\_\_\_\_

*ANOTHER STEP: What's the next small way to deepen Worship in your church's life, and also to make it more compelling for the people you hope to reach/engage?* \_\_\_\_\_

*How will this be accomplished?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What resources are needed to accomplish this change?* \_\_\_\_\_

*Who needs to be consulted (process)?* \_\_\_\_\_

*How will the congregation be involved in this change?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What will it cost?* \_\_\_\_\_

*How long will it take?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What other changes will this step necessitate?* \_\_\_\_\_

Action Plan: Teaching Generosity

**Your Task:**

**Prompting people to dedicate their whole lives as generous stewards**

*In order for your congregation to share God's love further, the church needs to help its members become more aware of their blessings, and, in faithful response, thankful and generous. As well, institutionally, your church needs to expect such abundant generosity: rather than asking for money because 'we don't have enough,' expense projections have to be presented for each step taken towards growth in mission and members. Contributors need to desire passionately that the mission work they are supporting is accomplished.*

*As the leader of the Generosity Action Team, you will attend The Generosity School at the CYN Fishing School. There you will gather with leaders from congregations throughout the state who share this generosity focus. Together you will work to understand and evolve the ways our UCC churches teach generosity. The Generosity School will provide you with resources, ideas, motivation, and effective evaluation. You will take all of this back to your local church setting to share with your Action Team.*

*Initially, your task is to work with your Action Team to devise a realistic, incremental Action Plan for the next few months. You should meet as soon as possible to work on the Generosity Action Plan.*

*The form on the following page will assist you; use this as a "blueprint" or a sketch of what you hope to accomplish. (The form we have provided is hardly roomy enough for all your Action Team might want to include. Feel free to make for yourselves, longer, more complete narratives and notes.) When you have completed this form, please click on the button at the bottom to forward it to CYN.*

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Generosity Action Plan**Name of Church:** \_\_\_\_\_**Town/City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Association:** \_\_\_\_\_**Generosity Leader:** \_\_\_\_\_**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_ **; Tel #** \_\_\_\_\_**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_**Who are the new people your church is trying to reach out to and engage in ministry?**

a) \_\_\_\_\_

b) \_\_\_\_\_

c) \_\_\_\_\_

**A STEP: What's one small way to make the congregation more aware of/thankful for their blessings, and to make this teaching more compelling for people you hope to reach/ engage?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_**How will this be accomplished?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_**What resources are needed to accomplish this change?** \_\_\_\_\_**Who needs to be consulted (process)?** \_\_\_\_\_**How will the congregation be involved in this change?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_**What will it cost?** \_\_\_\_\_ **How long will it take?** \_\_\_\_\_**What other changes will this step necessitate?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*ANOTHER STEP: What's another small way to connect people's generosity more directly to the steps your congregation is undertaking towards growth in mission and members/ mission work they feel a passionate desire for* \_\_\_\_\_

*How will this be accomplished?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What resources are needed to accomplish this change?* \_\_\_\_\_

*Who needs to be consulted (process)?* \_\_\_\_\_

*How will the congregation be involved in this change?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What will it cost?* \_\_\_\_\_ *How long will it take?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What other changes will this step necessitate?* \_\_\_\_\_

*ANOTHER STEP: What's one more small way to connect people's generosity more directly to the steps your congregation is undertaking towards growth in mission and members/ mission work they feel a passionate desire for?* \_\_\_\_\_

*How will this be accomplished?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What resources are needed to accomplish this change?* \_\_\_\_\_

*Who needs to be consulted (process)?* \_\_\_\_\_

*How will the congregation be involved in this change?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What will it cost?* \_\_\_\_\_ *How long will it take?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What other changes will this step necessitate?* \_\_\_\_\_

Action Plan: Inviting Others**Your Task:**

**Sharing your faith effectively—first in the gathered community, and next with the community beyond your four walls**

*In order for your congregation to share God's love further, the people of your church need to learn to speak with one another in a natural, confident way about their faith and its impact on their lives. Your congregation must also be able to share those blessings appropriately with others outside the church. In addition they must understand and be able to explain UCC faith as an invitation/promise to those whose lives might be enriched by participating, but do not know or understand what the church can offer.*

*As the leader of the Invitation Action Team, you will attend The Invitation School at the CYN Fishing School. There you will gather with leaders from congregations throughout the state who share this invitation focus. Together you will work to understand and evolve the ways our UCC churches become more effectively invitational. The Invitation School will provide you with resources, ideas, motivation, and effective evaluation. You will take all of this back to your local church setting to share with your Action Team.*

*Initially, your task is to work with your Action Team to devise a realistic, incremental Action Plan for the next few months. You should meet as soon as possible to work on the Invitation Action Plan.*

*The form on the following page will assist you; use this as a “blueprint” or a sketch of what you hope to accomplish. (The form we have provided is hardly roomy enough for all your Action Team might want to include. Feel free to make for yourselves, longer, more complete narratives and notes.) When you have completed this form, please click on the button at the bottom to forward it to CYN.*

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Invitation Action Plan**Name of Church:** \_\_\_\_\_**Town/City:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Association:** \_\_\_\_\_**Invitation Leader:** \_\_\_\_\_**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_ **; Tel #** \_\_\_\_\_**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_**Who are the new people your church is trying to reach out to and engage in ministry?****a)** \_\_\_\_\_**b)** \_\_\_\_\_**c)** \_\_\_\_\_**A STEP: What's one small way to encourage people in your church to share their faith more readily with one another?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_**How will this be accomplished?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_**What resources are needed to accomplish this change?** \_\_\_\_\_**Who needs to be consulted (process)?** \_\_\_\_\_**How will the congregation be involved in this change?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_**What will it cost?** \_\_\_\_\_ **How long will it take?** \_\_\_\_\_**What other changes will this step necessitate?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*ANOTHER STEP: What's the next small way to encourage your congregation to let people beyond your walls know how faith makes their lives more abundant?* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*How will this be accomplished?* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*What resources are needed to accomplish this change?* \_\_\_\_\_

*Who needs to be consulted (process)?* \_\_\_\_\_

*How will the congregation be involved in this change?* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*What will it cost?* \_\_\_\_\_ *How long will it take?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What other changes will this step necessitate?* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*ANOTHER STEP: What's another small way to help your congregation talk about UCC faith as an invitation/promise?* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*How will this be accomplished?* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*What resources are needed to accomplish this change?* \_\_\_\_\_

*Who needs to be consulted (process)?* \_\_\_\_\_

*How will the congregation be involved in this change?* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*What will it cost?* \_\_\_\_\_ *How long will it take?* \_\_\_\_\_

*What other changes will this step necessitate?* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX R**

**WORSHIP BULLETIN FOR *CYN SUNDAY* # 3**

***CASTING YOUR NETS***  
 at  
***The Chatterton Hill Church White Plains, New York***  
 The First Sunday after Epiphany  
 January 7, 2007 11:00 a.m.  
 Ruth Dwyer, Organist & Choir Director  
 The Rev. Bonnie Miller, Minister  
 Mr. Ervin Graves, Ministerial Intern

**The Prelude****The Introit****Taize**

"In the Lord I'll be ever thankful, in the Lord I will rejoice! Look to him,  
 do not be afraid; in him rejoicing: the Lord is near, in him rejoicing, the  
 Lord is near."

**The Call to Celebration**

Leader: Hear the voice of God, powerful and majestic.  
 Know the presence of God in this place.

PEOPLE: **God speaks to us in many and various ways;  
 God is revealed even in a quiet voice within us.**

Leader: See the works of God revealed in the life of Jesus;  
 feel the Spirit gently descending on our gathering.

PEOPLE: **God loves us and gives us life. God calls each of us  
 by name, offering us unique, meaningful lives of faith.**

Leader: Remember your baptism and sense God's benevolence in your  
 life. Recall God's covenant with you, and dare to live by it.

ALL: **God's creative work continues in us this day. We  
 praise God for the new opportunities this day brings.**

\*Opening Hymn "As with Gladness, Those of Old" #159

\*The Invocation

\*The Confession (in unison)

**All-embracing God, we are amazed at how well you know us,  
 inside and out. And yet, God, we feel the need to confess that we  
 have not been all you intended us to be. You well know the cares  
 that weigh us down and lead us astray. Forgive us, God, and grant us  
 the strength to turn away from the wrong that we originate or allow.  
 Widen our narrow vision, that we might see ourselves as part of your  
 divine purpose, and act accordingly. Amen.**

\*The Statement of Freedom

\*The Gloria Patri "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.  
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end.  
Amen, amen."

Announcements and Concerns

Anthem

From the Hebrew Scripture Isaiah 43:1-7 (page 785)

From the New Testament Luke 3:15-17,21-22 (page 81)

Sermon ~ *"Talented and Gifted"*

\*Hymn "Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ" # 347

The Church at Prayer

The Preparation for Prayer

"O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord hear my prayer, when I call, answer me.

O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer. Come and listen to me."

The Pastoral Prayer (with time for spoken or silent prayers)

The Prayer of the Messiah (using "trespasses")

The Offertory

The Doxology and the Prayer of Dedication

### **COMMUNION**

\*The Closing Hymn "Arise, Your Light Is Come" # 164

\*The Benediction (All join hands in a circle)

PEOPLE: Alleluia, Amen!

\*Choral Benediction

The Postlude

(\*All who are able, please stand)

We warmly welcome all who are visiting with us today. We're glad you are here!  
Please sign the guest book in the foyer as you leave the sanctuary. We also invite you  
downstairs for fellowship and refreshment after our service.

(Please note: on our communion tray, purple is grape juice, white is wine)



**God is still speaking,** ^ "Never place a period where God has placed a comma." (Gracie Allen)

**APPENDIX S**  
**SERMON FOR *CYN SUNDAY* # 3**

Sermon Title: *Talented and Gifted*  
 Scripture: Luke 3:15-22  
 Date: January 7, 2007

When my daughter was in fourth grade, a new after-school program was started. Those participating were hand chosen by their teachers and special monies were set aside to fund it. It was called the *Talented and Gifted Program*.

My daughter came home and told me about it, in tears because she hadn't been chosen. She was the top student in her grade that year, and couldn't understand why her teacher hadn't chosen her. She said that none of the so-called smart kids had been chosen. She didn't know why, but it didn't make sense to her. I told her that I would find out for her.

The next day, I phoned the school for answers. I spoke to the teacher in charge of the program, who explained that the program was really meant for mediocre students—those who fell through the cracks, so to speak. It was a program for those students who were not living up to their full potential, or had to work very hard to achieve their work. She said that the administration had decided to call it *Talented and Gifted* because the teachers wanted these students to understand that they were just that. The teachers wanted these youngsters to come out of the shadows and shine so that they would realize their own hidden talents and wonderful gifts.

Today, *talented and gifted* has become a well-known expression in the field of education. Just about every school has a program with such a name. The name doesn't really tell you much though. It could mean an honors program, an arts and music program, or even a special education program. Whatever it signifies, though, I think the name in itself is rather ironic, given the concept of separation of church and state. We have all heard the hullabaloo over prayer in schools. There are people who don't want to let God into school. But, then, I wonder, do people ever stop to really consider the source of being *talented and gifted*?

*Talents* . . . well, those could be understood to be traits passed down from parents or other relatives, but what about *gifts*? When school administrators use that word, *gifted*, from where do they think the gifts have come? *Talents* may be inborn in secular

language, but the very word *gift* implies that something has been given to you . . . and, if so, given by whom?

We, as part of the Christian community, are taught to believe that all our gifts, and all gifts, in fact, come from God. But I think that most of us, most of the time, would not label ourselves *talented and gifted*. We are more like those mediocre students back in my daughter's fourth grade class. Occasionally we let our talents and gifts shine, but more often we either take them for granted or don't know we have them. We reserve the title talented and gifted for those who really shine.

In fact, we have each been born with a set of talents, and we, as Christians, believe that these have come from God. And we believe that our gifts come from God. Is there a difference between these two terms?

Perhaps we can find some insight in today's scripture lesson from Luke. Believe it or not, we're only in chapter three. The first two chapters have whipped through the birth of Jesus, as first foretold, and then actually happening. By the end of the second chapter, Jesus is already twelve years old, and is found in the temple discussing theology with the Rabbis.

Now we're in chapter three, and we find Jesus being baptized. It is only January 7. I haven't gotten around to taking my tree down yet, and the manger still seems warm in my mind. We can still hear the angels singing in our carols this morning. But our church calendar, and even our gospel lesson is rushing us forward.

Just how old is Jesus today? And where has he been, what has he been doing since last Sunday?

Well, you'd be surprised to know that he is already about 30 years old today, and we haven't really heard what he's been doing since he appeared in the temple eighteen years or so ago! Jesus, son of God, the personification of all talents, seems to have been hiding them pretty well. Hmmm, he sounds like those mediocre students, doesn't he, hiding in the shadows. In the last verse of the previous chapter, we have been told, simply that Jesus grew both in body and wisdom, gaining favor with God and people.

This chapter, chapter three, begins with a discourse about John the Baptist, and then we come to today's text. In verses fifteen ~~through~~ seventeen, we hear about Jesus, but not by name.



And then, in such a small piece of scripture that we might miss it if we blink, we come to verses twenty-one and twenty-two. There it is—the turning point of Jesus’ life—an event that brings Jesus’ talents into the limelight—Jesus’ baptism.

While he is in the river Jordan with John, as he is praying, Jesus receives a gift—the gift of the Holy Spirit, which comes down upon him like a dove. In that moment, Jesus, always talented, and now gifted, begins his work. God’s gift to Jesus is empowerment. He is empowered to use all the talents with which he entered this world as he begins to do God’s work.

Almost all of us have been baptized, but most of us as children, so we might understand our baptism in a different context. We associate it with being consecrated into the church family. Perhaps what most resembles Jesus’ baptism for us would be our confirmation ritual, or joining the church, or even taking communion. By that, I mean that Jesus chose to be baptized. In our tradition, we choose to be confirmed or to join the church. We even decide whether or not to come to church and receive communion. But how many of us understand that in the process, we who were once merely talented, become gifted, as well? That when we participate in these actions, of our own free will, God touches us with the Holy Spirit, empowering us to do God’s work?

Today, we will receive communion. As we do so, let us receive it as God’s gift to us. May it empower us to use our talents to do God’s work before us, even today in our Casting Your Nets workshop. As we learned last time, this church is full of many talented people. May God’s Holy Spirit touch each of us, and touch us as a church today, that we might truly know ourselves to be *talented and gifted for ministry*, and may we let our talents and gifts shine! Amen!

**APPENDIX T**  
**COMPLETED ACTION PLAN FORMS**

Mission Action Plan

**Name of Church:** Chatterton Hill Church  
**Town/City:** White Plains **Association:** Metropolitan  
**Mission Leader:** [Focus Group Participants 1 and 4]  
**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_ **; Tel #** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Who are the new people your church is trying to reach out to and engage in ministry?**

- a) Spanish-speaking neighbors
- b) Koreans in our area
- c) Young people and the elderly in our neighborhood

**A STEP: What's one small way to make Mission more the focus of your church life, and also more compelling for the people you hope to reach/engage?** \_\_\_\_\_  
expand current youth group

**How will this be accomplished?** \_\_\_\_\_  
choose a mission project and advertise it (ex. – Habitat for Humanity)

**What resources are needed to accomplish this change?** more adult volunteers

**Who needs to be consulted (process)?** entire church

**How will the congregation be involved in this change?** \_\_\_\_\_  
commitment of time and donations toward project

**What will it cost?** time, transportation **How long will it take?** ongoing

**What other changes will this step necessitate?** \_\_\_\_\_

**ANOTHER STEP: What's the next small way to make Mission more the focus of your church life, and also more compelling for the people you hope to reach/engage?**

expand the church school

**How will this be accomplished?** reach out to the children of adults enrolled in our Saturday afternoon ESL program

**What resources are needed to accomplish this change?** more teachers/caregivers

**Who needs to be consulted (process)?** entire congregation

**How will the congregation be involved in this change?** \_\_\_\_\_

volunteer to teach church school or provide nursery school care

**What will it cost?** commitment of time **How long will it take?** ongoing

**What other changes will this step necessitate?** using church space in different ways to accommodate more classes

**ANOTHER STEP: What's the next small way to make Mission more the focus of your church life, and also more compelling for the people you hope to reach/engage?**

arranging transportation for our members in nursing homes/homebound

**How will this be accomplished?** consulting social workers in nursing homes,

setting up list of volunteers to transport seniors

**What resources are needed to accomplish this change?** drivers

**Who needs to be consulted (process)?** entire congregation

**How will the congregation be involved in this change?** \_\_\_\_\_

volunteer extra time needed to pick up and return seniors

**What will it cost?** time & effort **How long will it take?** ongoing

**What other changes will this step necessitate?** n/a

Fellowship Action Plan

**Name of Church:** Chatterton Hill Church

**Town/City:** White Plains **Association:** Metropolitan

**Fellowship Leader:** [Focus Group Participant 2]

**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_ **; Tel #** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Who are the new people your church is trying to reach out to and engage in ministry?**

- a) Spanish-speaking neighbors
- b) Koreans in our area
- c) Young people and the elderly in our neighborhood

**A STEP: What's one small way to strengthen the Fellowship in your church life, and also to make it more compelling for people you hope to reach/engage?** \_\_\_\_\_

increase attendance of these groups at our Potluck suppers

**How will this be accomplished?** invite them, welcome them, and make them feel comfortable in our midst ; offer after-dinner program of interest to visitors

**What resources are needed to accomplish this change?** invitation flyers and door-to-canvass to pass them out; extra food for potluck supper; after-dinner program

**Who needs to be consulted (process)?** Potluck Club Committee

**How will the congregation be involved in this change?** ensure that all welcome new visitors (sit with them), and bring extra side dishes/desserts/beverages, etc.

**What will it cost?** N/A **How long will it take?** 1 month

**What other changes will this step necessitate?** add names and addresses of visitors to mailing list; prepare info packet about church to distribute to visitors (translated into Spanish and Korean, as well)

**ANOTHER STEP: What's the next small way to strengthen the Fellowship in your church life, and also to make it more compelling for people you hope to reach/engage?**

enlist some members to participate in knitting with Spanish-speaking neighbors

**How will this be accomplished?** prepare a sign-up sheet, asking that members start by volunteering to be present for one Saturday

**What resources are needed to accomplish this change?** someone to enlist volunteers; extra yarn and knitting needles

**Who needs to be consulted (process)?** Rev. Bonnie and xxxxx

**How will the congregation be involved in this change?** volunteering their time

**What will it cost?** N/A **How long will it take?** 1-2 wks

**What other changes will this step necessitate?** tightening up Saturday afternoon ESL class schedule (so as to know exactly what time volunteers should be present)

**ANOTHER STEP: What's the next small way to strengthen the Fellowship in your church life, and also to make it more compelling for people you hope to reach/engage?**

provide flower-arranging classes to ESL class participants

**How will this be accomplished?** arrange date with xxx, our master flower-arranger), with Rev. Bonnie and with ESL class participants

**What resources are needed to accomplish this change?** flowers, flower-arranging materials, other volunteers from congregation

**Who needs to be consulted (process)?** xxxx and Rev. Bonnie

**How will the congregation be involved in this change?** other volunteers are needed to assist as ladies will need hands-on help

**What will it cost?** \$50 **How long will it take?** 2 weeks

**What other changes will this step necessitate?** no time to teach English that day

Worship Action Plan

**Name of Church:** Chatterton Hill Church

**Town/City:** White Plains **Association:** Metropolitan

**Worship Leader:** [Focus Group Participant 8]

**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_ **; Tel #** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Who are the new people your church is trying to reach out to and engage in ministry?**

- a) Spanish-speaking neighbors
- b) Koreans in our area
- c) Young people and the elderly in our neighborhood

**A STEP: What's one small way to deepen Worship in your church's life, and also to make it more compelling for the people you hope to reach/engage?** \_\_\_\_\_

add music that would attract young people

**How will this be accomplished?** have youth group present praise music before worship each Sunday

**What resources are needed to accomplish this change?** Youth Group

**Who needs to be consulted (process)?** Church Council, Music Chair, Organist

**How will the congregation be involved in this change?** \_\_\_\_\_

congregation will be encouraged to come early to support the youth

**What will it cost?** nothing **How long will it take?** 1 month

**What other changes will this step necessitate?** Choir will have to move its rehearsal time to another space; powerpoint & instruments will have to be left in sanctuary during service

**ANOTHER STEP: What's the next small way to deepen Worship in your church's life, and also make it more compelling for the people you hope to reach/engage?** \_\_\_\_\_

offer quarterly multicultural/multilingual services

**How will this be accomplished?** plan services that will include all three languages (English, Korean, Spanish) for special occasions (Easter, Children's Day, etc)

**What resources are needed to accomplish this change?** all 3 ministers

**Who needs to be consulted (process)?** Church Council

**How will the congregation be involved in this change?** Planning multicultural fellowship for after service; participating in singing in other languages

**What will it cost?** nothing **How long will it take?** n/a

**What other changes will this step necessitate?** intentional invitation of neighbors (door-to-door flyers) and publicizing in local papers/TV

**ANOTHER STEP: What's the next small way to deepen Worship in your church's life, and also to make it more compelling for the people you hope to reach/engage?** \_\_\_\_\_

providing meditative worship time

**How will this be accomplished?** meditation service after regular worship service

**What resources are needed to accomplish this change?** leadership, child care

**Who needs to be consulted (process)?** Church Council, pastoral staff, choir director

**How will the congregation be involved in this change?** \_\_\_\_\_

invited to participate and spread the word that this now available in our church

**What will it cost?** nothing **How long will it take?** immediate

**What other changes will this step necessitate?** youth choir must practice right after worship service and leave sanctuary promptly



Generosity Action Plan

**Name of Church:** Chatterton Hill Church

**Town/City:** White Plains **Association:** Metropolitan

**Generosity Leader:** [Focus Group Participants 4, 5, and 6]

**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_ **; Tel #** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Who are the new people your church is trying to reach out to and engage in ministry?**

- a) Spanish-speaking neighbors
- b) Koreans in our area
- c) Young people and the elderly in our neighborhood

**A STEP: What's one small way to make the congregation more aware of/thankful for their blessings, and to make this teaching more compelling for people you hope to reach/ engage?** hire a part-time Hispanic minister

**How will this be accomplished?** hire Arelis Figueroa on probationary, one-day work week basis (per diem)

**What resources are needed to accomplish this change?** money for salary

**Who needs to be consulted (process)?** entire congregation @ Annual Meeting

**How will the congregation be involved in this change?** approving salary as part of 2007 budget

**What will it cost?** \$5,200 **How long will it take?** n/a

**What other changes will this step necessitate?** seeking and applying for grant money to cover cost of program (besides salary)

**ANOTHER STEP: What's another small way to connect people's generosity more directly to the steps your congregation is undertaking towards growth in mission and members/ mission work they feel a passionate desire for** approve renovation of the church kitchen (we are a church that is known for feeding!)

**How will this be accomplished?** using funds from legacy left by faithful member of the Women's Association and monies collected previously for this purpose

**What resources are needed to accomplish this change?** see above

**Who needs to be consulted (process)?** Trustees, Council, whole church

**How will the congregation be involved in this change?** ad hoc committee will be formed (anyone may join) to make decisions about/oversee renovation; final approval at special congregational meeting

**What will it cost?** approx. \$10,000 **How long will it take?** several mos.

**What other changes will this step necessitate?** changing coffee hour format, postponing potluck suppers (and substituting other meal-type fundraisers), holding annual tea in another location

**ANOTHER STEP: What's one more small way to connect people's generosity more directly to the steps your congregation is undertaking towards growth in mission and members/ mission work they feel a passionate desire for?** \_\_\_\_\_

**How will this be accomplished?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What resources are needed to accomplish this change?** \_\_\_\_\_

**Who needs to be consulted (process)?** \_\_\_\_\_

**How will the congregation be involved in this change?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What will it cost?** \_\_\_\_\_ **How long will it take?** \_\_\_\_\_

**What other changes will this step necessitate?** \_\_\_\_\_

Invitation Action Plan

**Name of Church:** Chatterton Hill Church

**Town/City:** White Plains **Association:** Metropolitan

**Invitation Leader:** [Focus Group Participants 3 and 9]

**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_ **; Tel #** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Who are the new people your church is trying to reach out to and engage in ministry?**

- a) Spanish-speaking neighbors
- b) Koreans in our area
- c) Young people and the elderly in our neighborhood

**A STEP: What's one small way to encourage people in your church to share their faith more readily with one another?** prepare new church brochure/pamphlet

**How will this be accomplished?** meet with ministers to design pamphlet, take all-church picture for outside of pamphlet

**What resources are needed to accomplish this change?** money, time

**Who needs to be consulted (process)?** Trustees, ministers

**How will the congregation be involved in this change?** donation of time, money; distribution of pamphlets to neighbors, friends, community

**What will it cost?** \$100+ **How long will it take?** 1 month

**What other changes will this step necessitate?** ongoing financial support and commitment of time to keep updated

**ANOTHER STEP: What's the next small way to encourage your congregation to let people beyond your walls know how faith makes their lives more abundant?** \_\_\_\_\_

increase local mailing of church newsletter/invitations to worship & events

**How will this be accomplished?** procuring mailing list of new residents, creating flyers, postcards, invitations

**What resources are needed to accomplish this change?** time, money, mailing lists

**Who needs to be consulted (process)?** real estate agents, professional list distributors

**How will the congregation be involved in this change?** \_\_\_\_\_

volunteer time, financial support

**What will it cost?** \$50 @ mo. **How long will it take?** ongoing

**What other changes will this step necessitate?** create ongoing team to do this mailing and keep mailing lists updated

**ANOTHER STEP: What's another small way to help your congregation talk about UCC faith as an invitation/promise?** increase local advertisement

**How will this be accomplished?** contact local paper, cable to do an article about our programs

**What resources are needed to accomplish this change?** time

**Who needs to be consulted (process)?** n/a

**How will the congregation be involved in this change?** \_\_\_\_\_

be present to discuss church with reporter/photographer

**What will it cost?** n/a **How long will it take?** 1 day

**What other changes will this step necessitate?** none

**APPENDIX U**

**FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

## FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Tell me who you are, which *Casting Your Nets* team you lead (or co-lead), how long you have been a member of our church, and what you like best about our church.
2. When you first heard about *Casting Your Nets*, what came to mind? This can be a short answer, just a line or two.
3. In what ways did you think *Casting Your Nets* might impact the church when you first heard about it?
4. During the first workshop, the five ministry areas were introduced (MISSION, FELLOWSHIP, WORSHIP, GENEROSITY, and INVITATION). I'd like you to tell me what you thought your group was supposed to accomplish when we first began *CYN*.
5. Our first *CYN Sunday* included the powerpoint sermon during worship, and the mapping the community and timeline exercises during the workshop. What did you find most interesting, surprising, or useful during our first *CYN Sunday*?
6. Our second *CYN Sunday* involved a sermon by Rev. Caine on *The Glass Half Full*, on the fish and loaves story, and how there was more than enough to feed those there. He talked about how the church holds back. As the workshop began we had reports from the three small groups that had completed the mapping of our service area, created a list of agencies in the area, and made a chart showing the demographics of the area. We then proceeded to map our assets, gifts, and talents, and to brainstorm ways we might use our assets to do ministry in our service area. What did you find most interesting, surprising, or useful during our first *CYN Sunday*?
7. Our third and final *CYN Sunday* involved a sermon by me entitled *Talented and Gifted*. The workshop focused on completing Action Plan forms, based upon work already begun by your teams, or soon to be started. What did you find most interesting, surprising, or useful during our first *CYN Sunday*?
8. *Casting Your Nets* uses a model of change done as "baby steps." Say something about the advantages or disadvantages of using this strategy.
9. Describe what you think your particular group accomplished and how you feel about your group's work.
10. As you know, our church was used as a pilot location for a larger-scale program for our New York Conference. If you were asked to describe this program and how it affected our church to someone in a sister church, what would you say?
11. Did everyone say what they wanted about this?
12. I am now going to summarize what I think you've said here tonight, and you'll tell me how I did with that. Then I will ask you to tell me if there is anything we should have said that we missed.

**APPENDIX V**  
**FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION VERBATIM**

## FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION VERBATIM

Key: A = Author; P1 – P9 = Participants 1 - 9
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**Question 1**

**A: Tell me who you are, which *Casting Your Nets* team you lead (or co-lead), how long you have been a member of our church, and what you like best about our church.**

P1: My name is . . . I co-lead Mission. I have been in the church thirty years, an old-timer. What I like about the church is the warmth and comradery. It's small, and I like a small church, and it is ever-changing, it's dynamic. Over the thirty years, I've seen lots of changes and that's a good thing.

P2: My name is . . . I'm a Fellowship co-leader. I've been a member of this church for one year and two months. What I like about this church is its fellowship. It's warm and cozy, this fellowship.

P3: My name is . . . I co-lead Invitation. I've been a member of this church for two years. And what I like about the church is that it's small, like a family, the people are very warm and caring, and I always feel very comfortable there.

P4: My name is . . . and I co-lead Fellowship. I've been at the church for twenty years. And since I came the church was nice, warm, small, inviting, and that's what I like...very family orientated.

P5: My name is . . . and I co-lead Generosity, and I've only been around three years, I think, about three-and-a-half years. And I like it for what everybody else said, but I also enjoy the sermons and the fact that I can relate to the sermons and they make me feel, each one, has something to say to me and it connects to the fellowship and warmth.

P6: My name is . . . and I co-lead the Generosity group. I've been at the church at least six, seven years. I like the intimacy of the church people, and the Sunday school. It's very family-oriented.

P7: I am . . . I co-lead the Generosity. I like the church because it's a caring place, people there make me feel welcome. I've been coming here for the past nineteen years, but joined after this minister came. I like the minister and the way she cares about people, she is very caring.

P8: I'm . . . I've been at the church for about 11 years. I lead the Worship team. I like the church because of the fellowship . . .it's warm.



P9: I'm . . . I co-lead the Invitation team. I've been coming to the church now, I guess, a little over a year. I'm not a member yet. I guess we should do something about that. What I like about the church it's just about ditto to what everybody else said...the people, the music . . . it's just great.

### **Question 2**

**A: When you first heard about *Casting Your Nets*, what came to mind? This can be a short answer, just a line or two.**

P1: Like the Bible, go out and increase your numbers, let's be fishers of men, women, children . . . cast your nets, like fishers of men, get people.

P2: Go out into the street, that's what I thought.

P3: The same thing, throwing your net out, and see what you can pull in!

P4: Pull them in, pull them in, pull them in! (lots of laughing)

P5: Same thing,

P6: I think of fish and I think of people, flapping around, in the net and seeing if we can get them in. (more laughing)

P7: Reaching out, encouraging new members, trying to get people into the church so they can see what we're all about.

P8: Same thing. Evangelism.

P9: Pretty much...yup...just throw out the nets, and bring 'em all in.

### **Question 3**

**A: In what ways did you think *Casting Your Nets* might impact the church when you first heard about it?**

P1: That it might give us some sort of framework to do what we've been talking about...increasing our members. This might be a way to do it, it could give us a way.

P2: I think this program, CYN, let us think about church growth.

P3: I thought it was a way that maybe the church would grow, that we would get more members.

P4: The first thing I thought when I heard *Casting Your Nets* was what are they casting their nets to catch? (laughter) As the program got along, then I realized that people are coming into the church, so we are doing something right with casting our nets.

P5: To bring in membership, but to spread the word, even before the membership. Because once you cast your net, you want to make sure all the fish stay, so we need to spread the word about what the church is doing and who we are.

P6: I really thought that it would be a way of not just bringing people in, but those people that are already here, getting them more involved. This is the first time I think I've seen some of the members of the church more active.

P7: Bringing in new people is okay, but I like the church the way it was and I was wondering if they would fit. You know, bringing in new ideas. At first, I was nervous, because I didn't want anything to interrupt the way we interact with each other. After we went along, I kind of realized that it was kind of important, and that some people are looking for what we have.

P8: When I first heard about it, I thought of having us really evaluate reasons why we were coming to church. Is it about coming to church for developing our relationship with God, and in so doing, what people see happening in our lives, they might want to become a member of the church. Basically, I'm thinking relationship with God, making us think about developing deeper relationships with God.

P9: Yeah, when I first heard about it I thought it was to breakdown, it was a method, or actually it was a plan of action to go out and address increasing membership and addressing a lot of other areas of the church.

#### **Question 4**

**A: During the first workshop, the five ministry areas were introduced (MISSION, FELLOWSHIP, WORSHIP, GENEROSITY, and INVITATION). I'd like you to tell me what you thought your group was supposed to accomplish when we first began CYN.**

P1: I suspect the expectation was that I would really help clearly define what our focus really is, a mission statement, or maybe not only define it. We've got a whole mission statement that was part of the doctoral thesis of our previous minister. Some of sitting here helped write it, and maybe that was a good reason that I was on this team. Perhaps maybe also to live out some of those things we spell out I mean, it really, um, is a very laudible sort of mission statement that we have, and I don't really know how many people realize it really came from the congregation. It might look like something someone else wrote, but it was a series of workshops and input from different people that resulted in a mission statement. I guess the expectation was to sort of ensure that aspects of that mission statement are sort of worked on, accomplished, and maybe revisited. We're going to fight for justice, we're, all of us, going to get along. We're multicultural, we're multiethnic, we're going to work toward justice for all people. I think it's really a very powerful mission statement. It's really quite old by now, it's about twenty years old. We should probably highlight it, because some of the people don't know about. Most of the people who have been in the church as long as I have helped craft it. I was so impressed that just ordinary folk put it together.

P2: Fellowship...I think that church worship and fellowship are important. When people come to church, it is important that they are greeted. We needed to focus on how we can have a good time together. (laughter)

P3: I chose Invitation because I like our church, and I'm proud of it. Other churches, I went to, I would never ask anybody to come (laughter), I would just go, and just leave, but I like our church and I just want to share it. And I thought that we needed to accomplish was to get people not only to visit the church but to continue coming, because there's a lot of people that come and then you never see them again.

P4: I think that Fellowship worked on what it needed to work on, and we're ahead of schedule. I think Fellowship is important because when people come in, they need to be greeted. And we have somebody who is very good at that, and we all know who that is, Mr. C.

P5: I was a little confused about what Generosity was about. I was a little confused between generosity and stewardship . . . because I felt that there had to be a commitment and part of that commitment was money, or time and effort, or talent, or whatever you could give, and I kind of thought there was an overlap between the two. The funny thing is that, as I examined it, I found that the church does a lot, for a small church, it does a lot. The only thing is that, as P4 says, we are already doing it. The only thing that I would like to see is for us to get some major outside contributions to support the church. I didn't think of it then, I'm talking about major effort. After all, we are a multicultural church, and I would like to get others to recognize it and invest in the church, and investment of self, not only with membership, but with local community leaders and politicians, you know, hospitals, other philanthropists...who would see the good work that we're doing and invest something in us. That would be nice.

P7: Can I comment on that, too? I was thinking as you were talking, about the concept of sowing seed is so prevalent in the bible, and so when you get involved in sowing seeds, or in giving, it comes back to you, financial as well as ...

P5:...yeah, supportive effort.

P6: Before I got started, I thought Generosity was all about finances, I really did, and getting the membership to be more generous, and since then, of course, it's been more about expanding beyond us to the community, and it being more generous as well.

P7: I thought also it [Generosity] was about fundraising, but then I also came to realize that it meant getting involved in other things, and my thought was that we need to do more for the youth in the church, so that they, in turn, could talk about what we are doing with their friends, and bring more younger people in, because we don't really have a lot of young people in the church, and if we want the church to grow, we, the folk that are kind of getting there, we need to have younger people to take over, so the church can continue to grow, and they can bring their friends. That's what I thought we needed to be

able to do, focus on the youth, do more interactions with them, have things that would encourage them, and bring new people in.

P8: In Worship, for years we have been discussing the music we use in the service and changing the music, and you know, it so affects our worship.

P9: I chose Invitation because I was new to the church and I wanted to get the word out to the community that this church exists here, because I found it through the internet, and I live just about a mile away, and I didn't even know it was here. I passed by it all the time, and I wasn't even sure if the church was open. So we did talk about getting a new sign for the church, and fixing up the outside of the church, make it look a little more inviting...

P6: ....like painting the door red...(laughter)...red!

### **Question 5**

**A: Our first *CYN Sunday* included the powerpoint sermon during worship, and the mapping the community and timeline exercises during the workshop. What did you find most interesting, surprising, or useful during our first *CYN Sunday*?**

P3: I thought that was useful, 'cause I realized that I really didn't care for that type of service. And then, I thought the timeline was interesting, because having only been a member for only two years, I could see the history of the church and how many people had actually been in the church, and you know, people that are pretty old have been there for a really long time...like [H], she's ninety-four, and she's been there for fifty or sixty years. I found that very interesting.

P6: I guess, as a public school teacher, I didn't have any problem with the powerpoint presentation, because that's something I'm already accustomed to. We have conferences with that, and non-traditional, so I was all for that, you know, that it wasn't a typical, traditional service, I guess.

P3: No, but it shouldn't look like a seminar to me, it didn't feel like a worship service to me...it should feel like church.

P6: But, it did! I guess it still did to me, because we still had the other parts of the service

P4: The part that I felt was stressed was the part when he had it all up, the part when we all read the scripture, that part was nice.

P1: Actually, the workshop was a very good time for me. It helped me to remember a lot of things about the church. It made me feel like an old-timer. I came here in my twenties, and everybody looked so old, and now I'm right there where they were. We did quite a lot of things, many things that I had forgotten about, how many people, and how vibrant the church was. It was always, even when I came, was always a diverse church. And even

with close to 200 hundred people, it still managed to be very warm and engaging, so we never lost that. That was really very good for me, it was reminiscing.

P2: The timeline was very interesting. Looking at the past, and looking now, it was very nice, and it made me realize that I am a church member, and part of the history.

P4: I think the mapping and the timeline was very enlightening for me, because most of the stuff, I didn't know, like when they did their mission trips, and all the ministers and what they did, the different stages they took the church through.

P5: Like P3, as a newer person, it gave me a sense of history, because I think that to now where you're going, it's important to know where you came from. And as a person new to the neighborhood, I think it really helped me a lot. And adding to the powerpoint comments, you know the kids use that now to project their music, and I kind of like that. You know, I work with ministers in my job who technically advanced, and they use that. I like the idea of the hymns on the powerpoint, but not to the point that you lose the sermon and the feel. I like just those things that enhance the service, like the hymns, or new music

P3: But also, with that particular presentation, we knew that it was a way to get us introduced to and motivated with Casting Your Nets, so it kind of seemed to me like a sales pitch.

P5: You could probably save money on hymnals...

P1: ... or stay current. In my daughter's church, that's all they do. They don't have hymnals, they project them on the screen.

P4: But I like the hymnals.

P7: I don't think I was there that day.

P8: I wasn't there for the second part, but the powerpoint, I remember thinking, and this is just me, that evangelism, you know, deals mostly with us beseeching God, you know praying to God, you know, what should we do, so and so and so, not leaving it up to him, but asking him for direction, and then we do what he says to do, and I found that I don't know if I like planning, okay we're going to do this, this, this, and this, without seeking God first, and that's how I felt.

P9: I know I was not there for this, but I really wish I was, because I would have liked to take part in the timeline exercise, and I'm not sure what I would have thought about the powerpoint. I don't think I would really go for it.

**Question 6**

**A: Our second *CYN Sunday* involved a sermon by Rev. Caine on *The Glass Half Full*, on the fish and loaves story, and how there was more than enough to feed those there. He talked about how the church holds back. As the workshop began we had reports from the three small groups that had completed the mapping of our service area, created a list of agencies in the area, and made a chart showing the demographics of the area. We then proceeded to map our assets, gifts, and talents, and to brainstorm ways we might use our assets to do ministry in our service area. What did you find most interesting, surprising, or useful during our first *CYN Sunday*?**

P1: Well, you know the story of the loaves and fishes. This was the first time that I realized that the disciples were divvied up and given assignments. I always thought that they went along, willy-nilly, and they just fed people. But I learned that Sunday that there were different groups, manageable groups, that they went and fed the people. And I suspect that relates to what we are doing. We don't have to do all these things at one time. If we took it in small doses, it is doable. I actually did pay attention to the sermon and I remember talking to Michael about it afterwards, that I never knew that that's the way it really went. I explained to him that I never got that, and I heard the story a bazillion times, as to how it relates to us.

P3: Right, that's what I remember, too.

P4: But what about the assets? For some reason, I can't really remember how we did that, I know we had questions to answer, but I can't remember the questions.

P1: Right, I vaguely remember that, but what were the questions?

P8: Yes, we wrote all those words on paper and put them in the middle of the table, but weren't there questions that were read to us to do that?

**A: Yes, these were the questions:**

- ~What is a physical asset that is unique to this congregation?
- ~What is something that you care a lot about?
- ~What is something you know a lot about?
- ~What is something you can do or make with your hands?
- ~Name a talent or skill you see in someone else in your group.
- ~Something that you enthusiastically spend money on?
- ~What are some things that you can make or do that someone would pay you for?
- ~What businesses are represented in this congregation?
- ~What are the gifts that allow this congregation to survive?
- ~What are the assets you might overlook in yourself or this church because it's out of sight or out of mind?
- ~What did you used to be good at?
- ~What are some assets you only use on special occasions?
- ~Name a contact or resource you can access in your work place.

~One skill you bring from your family life.

~What kind of cultural activity or recreation do you enjoy?

~What's the craziest thing you do?

**Then, you all put down your answers, and threw them in the center. Then you were given time to look at all these answers and come up with some ideas that you could try to help strengthen the church in your particular ministry area.**

P3: So what happened was that my group was made up of only me and all the rest were Spanish, so you know they speak Spanish, and my Spanish, is, you know, so we answered all the questions, but we couldn't do the second half of the exercise, we didn't go any further with that.

P5: I remember it being too rushed, because it was already late, and people wanted to leave. We spent a lot of time on looking at the demographics and the agencies, and we did come up with something, but we could have used more time.

A: Yes, Michael and I felt the same way, and, in fact, this exercise was given more time when it was done at the statewide kick-off. Does anybody remember what their group did come up with, though?

P1: Oh, yes, my group came up with feeding, because we had a lot of answers that had to do with cooking and eating.

P4: Yes, now I remember that we came up with flower-arranging, because some of the Spanish ladies had put that down, and P1's group had put that down, as well.

A: Yes, you know, the purpose of this assets mapping is to help you realize that your church has gifts and talents it's not even aware of.

P3: Yes, you know, I know people in the church, but I don't really know anyone in the church very well, or what they can do, or like to do, because I don't know.

P8: Can I say something? As I'm thinking about it, I thought it was an excellent way for fellowship, as P3 said, I don't think we really know each other, and I was just blown away by the words we came up with and how they related so much to the different groups, so I thought it was an excellent idea. It was strange, but the things that came up were very interesting.

A: Did anybody have anything to say about what P1 and her first group brought back about the various agencies in our community?

P1: As a matter of fact, I found it interesting that the Spanish ladies that were there didn't even know the name we used...bodega...when we talked about the little store down from the church, that showed that we assume we know what they call something, but they didn't know what we were talking about. Also, the city of White Plains has a lot of

agencies that service the Spanish, but they don't know about all of them, and various of them use completely different agencies from others.

### **Question 7**

**A: Our third and final CYN Sunday involved a sermon by me entitled *Talented and Gifted*. The workshop focused on completing Action Plan forms, based upon work already begun by your teams, or soon to be started. What did you find most interesting, surprising, or useful during our first CYN Sunday?**

P1: I think we did a lot more than we expected to do. That was certainly surprising. Originally it all just looked like a lot of work, and I wasn't sure, with such a few of us, how we were going to accomplish all this. But we are a real pragmatic church, but for me it was surprising that we were already beginning to work on some of the things we discussed. That's what I derived from that particular Sunday.

P2: Yeah, it was surprising that we had done so many things.

P3: I wasn't there that Sunday.

P4: I think we've done most of the things we said we were going to do. Is there anything we haven't done?

A: We've done more than we said we were going to do, because we could only put three on a form, and we've done more. For example, we've done drama in worship, but that's not listed. And you all realize that these are not baby steps, they're really not.

P4: Yes, we're going full force ahead.

A: And I don't think we made this clear, so I should say this. These are not meant for a one-time thing. They are ongoing, once you are done with these actions, you can start on more. As someone here said, this is a structure, a plan. The actions can change, but those we are targeting can change, too.

P1: Right, because, there are some kids from group homes that come, and we could probably target that population. I suspect they come from around here.

A: Yes, they come from the group home on the corner. P5, did you want to say anything?

P5: Surprising that we've done as much as we did.

P6: I had to leave early that day to take care of my father.

P7: I wasn't there either. Everybody here knows that I am not in church every single Sunday, and I was away.

P8: I remember feeling that a lot of the things we had done had already been put in place.



P9: It's always interesting, when you break into groups and hear other people's ideas, you think, now why didn't I think of that. I think it was surprising how fast it did come together and not just for my group, but then we went around, and every other group had come up with ideas, so, for example, I would say generosity was one thing, but then you would hear what the Generosity group had come up with and it was a completely different thing and that was surprising.

### **Question 8**

**A:  *Casting Your Nets*  uses a model of change done as “baby steps.” Say something about the advantages or disadvantages of using this strategy.**

P8: Can I speak first, so I don't forget? I'm thinking that it's a great method to use because a lot of times people make changes by just thrusting it down other people's throats. So this is a way of easing the idea into people's minds, so that they don't feel forced to do something you didn't want to do, and it's from the people, they're involved in it.

P5: I think as a model, you have to go this way because you can be flexible and do more than baby steps, as we did, but if you're not that kind of church, you have to start, like when you're teaching. You've got a lesson plan, and it's like this, and you can go this way or that way with it.

P3: You're right, it's good for people that are into change, but also it takes forever for anything to happen.

P1: Right, it would frustrate people who are eager for change.

P3: Yes, that would be a disadvantage, the baby steps could be a slow process.

P1: Right, people could try little things and never accomplish anything, never settle on any one change, not even one. And we've seen that, too.

P4: But I don't think our church does baby steps.

P1: No, but I've seen that, too. We're in a different place now. We've just evolved. I remember once, we tried singing the doxology different, and people just stopped coming. (laughter).

P4: And somebody else stopped coming because of greetings. They weren't going to shake anybody's hands. (more laughter)

A: Who else didn't say anything yet?

P9: Yeah, if you move in baby steps, the advantage it gives people a chance to get used to the change, it's small, you don't push them outside their comfort zone, but the

disadvantage is that it can take a long, it can frustrate the rest of us. But I think if you know your congregation, you can do the baby steps or you can take the big steps.

P1: And what risks you're willing to take, because where we are today had everything to do with the risks that our previous minister took. He really moved this church in a whole different direction, major stuff, and he was willing to take the fallout, and people that wanted to stay, stayed, and those who didn't are no longer here. So, yes, it just depends how much risk you want to take.

### **Question 9**

**A: Describe what you think your particular group accomplished and how you feel about your group's work.**

P4: I think we accomplished a lot in Fellowship.

P5: I think we accomplished a lot, but we've been on hold. I think we have to get going again.

P1: Some of these things overlap, though. We're such a small church, that everybody works on everything.

P4: Yes, it's a collective effort, really. I'm on Fellowship. But we introduced the praise worship, and people love it, they come. All the groups have been involved in that effort. We also did the flower-arranging with the Spanish ladies, even though that was sort of Mission.

P6: And the Generosity team hired a Spanish minister and got the kitchen renovation going.

P8: And like that worship piece, I didn't have anything to do with that. We talked about it, but then things just started to happen, and before you know it, it was in place and everybody enjoys it.

P5: Right, and again, that commitment piece, I'm not sure we really worked on.

P4: That praise worship happened because it went before the Deacons, and we asked the young people. They really wanted to do it, and we really wanted to encourage them. And boy, are they doing a good job.

P5: And Mission was going to arrange transportation for people in the nursing home, and they did do that, through our intern student minister.

P9: And our Invitation team worked on the new church brochure, which is ready to go to print. We were going to also increase our advertising, which we did, and you and Rev. Insook were on TV.

P4: We need to upgrade our sign, too.

P9: Yes, we already talked about that in our Invitation team, and we're going to start to work on that. Maybe with lighting or something.

### **Question 10**

**A: As you know, our church was used as a pilot location for a larger-scale program for our New York Conference. If you were asked to describe this program and how it affected our church to someone in a sister church, what would you say?**

P8: I think it motivated the church to action.

P9: Yes, it got everybody involved. It gave them a focus.

P1: Um-hm.

P3: It set a purpose. I mean, I think everyone wants the church to grow in all these areas, but nobody really knows what to do or how to do it, and so this kind of gives us a purpose and a framework, and a direction and organization.

P9: And I think it sort of opened us up to different ideas. You know, different cultural groups are part of the church, and it opened us up to accepting this.

P5: I think we got to know each other better.

**A: Oh! In Fellowship, there are other things we should have put down. Don't forget that a new Men's Group got started, and then a new Women's Group. And the Youth Group got stronger.**

P1: And the shared worship services, too, with our Spanish and Korean minister participating. Maybe they could do that in a somewhat formal way, perhaps quarterly, so we would have some sort of an expectation.

P5: Like that Korean New Year's celebration, that was so beautiful, with the Blessing of the Children.

P1: Right, because most Sundays, one group is coming as the other is going. It is so nice to have service together, so we can really get to know each other even better.

P8: Yes, that is being planned already. That service was nice, wasn't it, with the youngest one telling everyone how to bow down, and pulling everyone into the action. She was too much!

**Question 11**

**A: Did everyone say what they wanted about this?**

P1: Well, yes, we could say that this program gave us a direction, and a focus, and it energized us.

**Question 12**

**A: I am now going to summarize what I think you've said here tonight, and you'll tell me how I did with that.**

**First, I think that, when you first heard about Casting Your Nets, you thought it had to do with reaching out to people, and gathering people in, and having them stay.**

**How you felt it would impact the church , , , I think you said that you thought it might help the church, that it would be a way to focus on church growth.**

**Some people didn't like the powerpoint, while some people found it interesting...some people thought it sounded like a sales pitch. The timeline helped you to understand the long history of the church, and how we changed and grown. Some people felt that it was a time for reminiscing and highlighting the things we've done. For those of you who are new, it helped you to understand more about the church and how you fit into the history.**

**You felt that the second Sunday was rough, that it was rushed, and you would have liked to have spent more time on it. P8 said that she was surprised at how many talents we came up with in our piles, and how much we had to offer. We really didn't talk about the demographics.**

P3: Right, I was shocked. I have lived right here in the neighborhood for twelve years, and I didn't even realize how much the population has changed.

**A: Then we talked about the third Sunday and how much work we really have been doing in church...that we are a church that is open to change, and trying new things, and that we don't take baby steps, that we take leaps . . . that this is the formalizing of change that we were already open to. When we talked about the baby-steps, you said that this was a way to make change manageable, something that people can deal with, but the disadvantage is that some churches might not ever get anything done.**

**When we talked about what your groups had accomplished, you each realized that your group has accomplished even more things than you had listed, or thought you had done.**

**When asked how you would describe this to another church, you said that the program motivates you to focus yourself and your ministry, to do things you might think you can do, like you want your church to grow, but you don't really know how to start.**

**How well does all this capture what we've said this evening?**

P4: You did very well. I don't think you left anything out.

**A: Is there anything we should have said that we missed?**

P1, P2, P4: No.

**A: Thank you everybody. Now, let me tell you that your work has made a major impact in our New York Conference. We had twelve churches that participated in the statewide model for the long run, and all have had similar experiences. As you know, this is not really a stand-alone model. Churches do this together. Some of you have already participated. Now, this will be officially kicked-off on October 20-21, and we recommend a three-year involvement. Specialists have now been hired to train participants in each of the five ministry areas. In addition to their wisdom, much is gained by sharing with people in other churches who are in your ministry area Fishing Schools. So, thanks again, for your help with my doctoral work, and with the work you have done here at our church, and the way you have helped the larger church. I have a present for each of you (a *Casting Your Nets* t-shirt). And then we'll have cake for P7's birthday!**

**APPENDIX W**

**INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND VERBATIM**

## INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. **Tell me who you are, and how you are associated with our church.**
2. **Tell me about your involvement with the implementation of *Casting Your Nets*.**
3. **What is your impression of the church's response to *CYN*.**
4. **Discuss what you regard as the neighborhood's response as a result of *CYN*.**
5. **What achievements do you credit to this program?**
6. **What obstacles impact this program?**
7. **What do you see as the further steps that need to be addressed by this program?**
8. **As you know, our church was used as a pilot location for a larger-scale program for our New York Conference. Say something about how you think this might work in another congregation.**
9. **Do either of you have anything else you would like to say about *CYN*?**

## INTERVIEW DISCUSSION VERBATIM

Key: A = Author; P1 – P2 = Participants 1 and 2

**Question 1**

**A: Tell me who you are, and how you are associated with our church.**

P1: My name is . . . I am a member of Riverside Church, and a candidate for ordination in the Metropolitan Association of the United Church of Christ. I have been associating with Chatterton Hill almost four years. I first came through a referral from our Regional Conference Minister, who advised me that this church was interested in establishing a Hispanic ministry.

P2: My name is . . . I helped P1 to found the Hispanics at Riverside program twenty years ago. This past January, she asked me to accompany her to Chatterton Hill Church for a Three Kings celebration. I have been working with her on Saturdays ever since, teaching English to the Spanish-speaking women. In fact, we got married on June 16!

**Question 2**

**A: Tell me about your involvement with the implementation of *Casting Your Nets*.**

P1: I was asked to be part of the Invitation Team. I found this very much in line with the work I was already doing with the Latino community in the church's neighborhood. I was only present for the second *CYN Sunday*, but was kept informed on the implementation of the first and third *CYN Sundays*.

P2: Initially, I was not at all involved with, or knowledgeable about, *CYN* until after the pilot project was completed.

### **Question 3**

**A: What is your impression of the Chatterton Hill Church's response to CYN.**

P1: I have witnessed that the congregation has become more aware of the Latino presence around its environs. The church has also made a commitment to serving this population by offering me a paid position and allocating specific church funds for this ministry.

Also, members of the church gave of their time and finances by coming to our Saturday afternoon sessions to teach flower-arranging class. During a trilingual church anniversary service in June, members of the congregation expressed their sincere appreciation for the Latina women's participation in the service and for the ministry we are doing.

P2: In terms of outreach to the Latino community, there has been very clear enthusiasm and openness to continue in this direction. During two separate church services, I challenged the congregation to seriously respond to the Hispanic mission opportunity at their doorstep. Both times, I received numerous positive responses from members of the congregation, saying that they wholeheartedly support this program. I saw people with tears in their eyes during the witnessing of the women.

### **Question 4**

**A: Discuss what you regard as the targeted neighborhood's response as a result of CYN.**

P1: As a result of the church's reaction to CYN, and its new attitude toward reaching out to the Hispanic women and children, they, in turn, feel much more welcomed. When they were asked to attend the church's anniversary service, and to sing a song, their response was that they wanted to speak during the service. In fact, they each decided to give a testimonial and express their gratitude to the church. Several talked about how thankful they were that the church has provided them a safe place to meet, to make friends, to learn English, to pray, and to support each other. They are no longer simply an ESL class. They have become a ministry group, and have even chosen a new name for themselves—*Gente Nueva!* They have a theme song, too, which they like to sing whenever they get together with the congregation. They take up an offering each time they meet as a group, and trust the church to take care of this fund for them. The church has put this into a special fund in their name, which it keeps in the bank for them.

P2: Yes, I think that they feel that there is an honest and concerted effort by the Chatterton Hill Church people to reach out to the Latino community, and specifically to address the particular needs of this population. Even more, they feel their social and spiritual needs are being attended to by the church.

### **Question 5**

**A: What achievements do you credit to this program?**

P1: Since this new and stronger relationship has been built between the established congregation and the Saturday group, the Hispanic women have now expressed an interest in learning more about the United Church of Christ history and polity, as well as the Bible and what it means to live as a Christian. Up until this time, they were very clear that they were Roman Catholics, and must attend mass. They are now more open to deepening their faith and considering membership in our church.

P2: Specifically, the ESL classes. Although these were in place before the program was implemented, the church is now paying a salary. It has become more intentional, more



structured, and in addition to ESL, other arts and crafts projects have been included. Essentially, the church has become a real support system to the lives of these people. It is not just an isolated, separate Saturday afternoon activity any longer. They have become more integrated into the life of the church.

### **Question 6**

**A: What obstacles impact this program?**

P1: The attack on immigrants, the anti-immigrant sentiments that have been in place and growing . . .

P2: There is a national spirit that goes against reaching out to and welcoming the Latino community. It sets the tone for churches to avoid such outreach, especially during this administration's tenure.

P1: There is misinformation in the church.

P2: Of course, because the church is not disconnected from the world...

P1: No, what I am trying to say is that the members of the church need to be more educated about what the real issue is, and to stop blaming the immigrants for their situation . . .

P2: That's right. If people really knew who Jesus is, they would realize that Jesus was an immigrant. He taught people to go beyond their limits and their close-mindedness, to be open to the love of God for all people and to love likewise. The Parable of the Samaritan, what more do you want? Minister to the immigrants, or to anyone who is in the neighborhood, but outside the comfort zone of the congregation. That was Jesus' challenge to the Jews, to go beyond their norms and their limitations.

### **Question 7**

**A: What do you see as the further steps that need to be addressed by this program?**

P1: That people need to know more about the Latino community.

P2: But it's not just about the Latino community. It's about who Jesus is. The church, in terms of their faith foundation . . . if they had a faith foundation, if they understood what the gospel is about . . . The program needs to help people deepen their understanding and practice of the gospel and to what the church's mission is. That's the heart of the problem. It is not just political and sociological. It is a spiritual issue.

P1: And they need to know who their neighbors are, not just by identifying them, but by really knowing them. They need to understand their reality and their culture.

P2: That's not going to do anything unless God touches their hearts.

**A: So, tell me, how can the program make this happen?**

P1: The program can sponsor forums or lectures on the Latina reality, so they can know more about it.

**A: But this is what the program is about. The Invitation Team would be able to address this in their next Action Plan. This is an ongoing process. Is this what you mean?**

P1: Exactly. I think this would be the next step for us.

**Question 8**

**A: As you know, our church was used as a pilot location for a larger-scale program for our New York Conference. Say something about how you think this might work in another congregation.**

P1: First of all, each congregation needs to do a community assessment to determine what the population is that has not been invited to church, and what their needs are. Then this program will help the church to reach out to this group in a structured way. You know, for us, it was the Latino community. Other churches might find gays and lesbians, the working poor, the Koreans, the East Indians . . . other churches might find that they need to reach out to the affluent . . . why not? . . . or youth, or whomever God has placed in their neighborhood.

P2: I would say the same thing. It would challenge conventional attitudes to consider new possibilities for Christian mission and for understanding the gospel.

**Question 9**

**A: Do either of you have anything else you would like to say about CYN?**

P1: I want to say that this is not an easy process because human beings tend to be comfortable with their own kind and feel threatened by change. *CYN* brings about change. But we also have to remember that being a Christian is not easy either. We have been conformed by society, and the bottom line is that Christianity is about welcoming the stranger. When you do it to the least of these, you have done it to Jesus. And if you welcome strangers, you will inherit the kingdom of God.

P2: This program is necessary and vital for the growth of church mission and the fulfillment of the gospel mandate.

**A: I want to thank you both of you for your commitment and dedication to working with me on this project, and for your work with the Latino group within our church. You have made a definite impact on the affirmation of our cultural diversity and have helped us to get to know each other better, to accept our differences and to love each other for who we are. I look forward to continuing our *CYN* work with you.**

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